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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the presentations and events of the Second World Summit on Television for Children, to which over 180 speakers from 50 countries contributed, with additional delegates speaking in conference sessions and social events. The report includes the following sections: (1) production, including presentations on the child audience, family programs, the preschool audience, children's television role in human rights education, teen programs, and television by kids; (2) politics, including sessions on the v-chip in the United States, the political context for children's television, news, schools television, the use of research, boundaries of children's television, and minority-language television; (3) finance, focusing on children's television as a business; (4) new media, including presentations on computers, interactivity, the Internet, globalization, and multimedia bedrooms; and (5) the future, focusing on anticipation of events by the time of the next World Summit in 2001 and summarizing impressions from the current summit. The report also contains summaries of other summit events, including regional forums highlighting activities and problems of developing countries, master classes reflecting the demand for training at every level, and the launch of a 26-country television production initiative, "The Animated Tales of the World." (KB)

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# The Second World Summit on Television for Children

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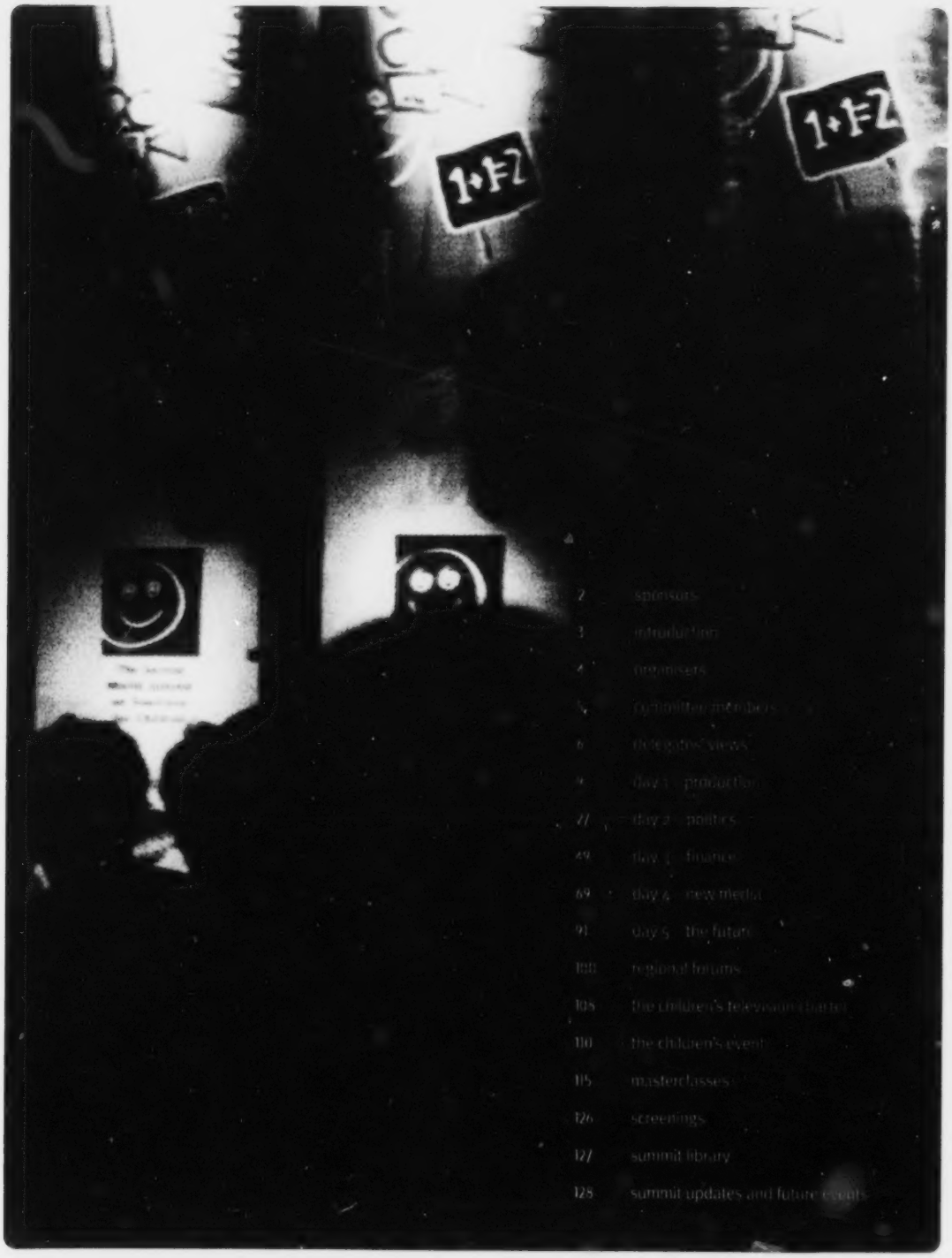



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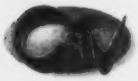

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# introduction

**Anna Home OBE**

The Second World Summit on Television for Children was held from 9 to 13 March 1998 at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London. With 1,600 delegates representing 82 different countries, the event generated a great deal of interest within the broadcasting industry worldwide. The announcement of the Third World Summit in Athens in 2001 to be organised by the European Children's Television Centre, followed by a Fourth to be held in South America in due course, makes it clear that the World Summit Children's Television Movement is now well established.

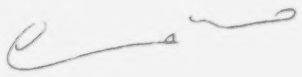
Each Summit will have its own characteristics and innovations. The First World Summit in Melbourne in 1995, organised by the Australian Children's Television Foundation, produced the Children's Television Charter, a document drafted by adults. In London, the delegates to the parallel children's event produced their own media charter, similar in intent but different in point of view (see pages 108 and 112).

Over 180 speakers from 50 countries contributed to the Second World Summit on the main themes of the week. We were glad to hear from many other delegates, too, both in the conference sessions and at the Summit's social events.

Through the regional forums, we tried to highlight the activities and problems of countries outside the developed world of Europe and North America, although we realised that considerably more time could have been spent discussing these issues. A further addition, the masterclasses, were also a great success, reflecting the demand for training at every level.

The S4C initiative, *The Animated Tales of the World*, a unique 26-country co-production, was launched at the Summit. An exciting on-going project, this will eventually be seen in more than 80 countries and in at least 27 languages. A Trust will be set up to administer the income from this series – a further initiative to emerge from the first two World Summits. The first project to be funded is the updated Second World Summit website incorporating this report (www.childrens-summit.org). The idea of a World Summit Foundation was raised at the London Summit and has been discussed subsequently, but at present there are no firm plans for such a body.

I hope that this report will give you the essence of the Second World Summit, ranging from the great Teletubby debate to the hilarity of the Henry the Four and a Third masterclass and Gareth Jones's Amazing Guide to New Media. It was a very full, very stimulating and very enjoyable week. I thank everyone involved and look forward with anticipation to Athens in 2001.

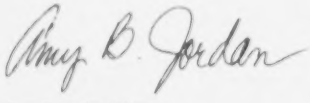


Anna Home OBE
Chair of the Second World Summit on Television for Children and Chief Executive of the Children's Film and Television Foundation

**Amy B Jordan PhD**

The Annenberg Public Policy Center is pleased to support the preservation and distribution of the proceedings of the Second World Summit on Television for Children. As leader of a delegation of American scholars, advocates, producers and programmers, I was pleased to see an international convergence in London of individuals involved with this tremendously important medium. How exciting it was to see children's television programmes from around the world! How interesting to hear how other countries creatively finance quality, educational programmes! And how inspiring to feel the energy of the children who came to the Summit to share the perspective of young people everywhere!

The 12 members of the Annenberg Public Policy Center delegation, myself included, testify to a deeper understanding of the value of international exchange and a new insight into the positive role television can play in the life of the developing child. Our project on children and television has benefited enormously from the information and contacts gathered at the Summit. We are delighted to have a role in making this information available to you and hope you read the proceedings with the goal of making the world a better place in which children can live and learn.



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Every effort has been made to ensure that we have given the correct name of delegates and their title as at the Second World Summit and that all contributions are as accurately represented as possible.

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# views from delegates

'Everyone I spoke with seemed enchanted with their Summit experience.'

'It was a very well organised conference and a lot of people seemed to get a lot out of it.'

'You have taken things a significant step further along the way.'

'When you go back home you feel much stronger to fight for children's programming.'

'I believe that the Summit will have great influence not only on children's TV but also children's media in China.'

'Bravo for the very efficient organisation of the Second Summit.'

'It was a chance to speak about our own experience but, most importantly, to learn from other people's work and to meet other professionals.'

'The many opinions given by the variety of people present were inspiring.'

'The event moved from strength to strength, and without doubt the importance of diversity in children's television has emerged as a major theme.'

'Congratulations to the entire Summit team on the successful Second World Summit. Your efforts were obvious, from the range of session topics to the lively discussions that happened all week long.'



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# voices from the children's event

What did you expect from this Summit and what have you learned?
I've learned so many things about other people's cultures and what their TV is like.
When I first came I was nervous because I was the only deaf person here, but now I'm alright.
When I go home I don't know what I'm going to do because I've got used to the high life – all those cameras following you around and going to all those expensive hotels...
I expected it to be all suits and ties. I didn't expect to be coming up on this stage with two balloons down my shirt and one of them getting popped and me being a chat show host called Donna.
I just didn't know what to expect because I hadn't been to anything like this before. Now I've met people from all over the world and learned a lot of things about their country.
I achieved a lot. What's most surprising is that I've found that most things the other children want is what I want to see on TV.
I think we've achieved our goal of telling the professional adults what we think about children's TV. I just hope that they really take it to heart and think about what we've been saying for the past few days and really do something about it.
I expected something totally different, very formal and scary. I had so much fun. I know I said all the things that I wanted to say and I didn't only speak for myself but I gave some ideas that my friends gave me back home in Israel.
I hope that other people can hear about this and television will be improved.

day

executive producer
agent provocateur

**Joan Lofts**
media consultant, UK

**Michael Forte**
Controller of Children's Programmes,
Carlton Television, UK

tv on trial: the child audience – do we know what it is?

**family programmes – friend or foe?**

when I was very young

**the role of children's television in human rights education**

global understanding, local survival – finding the balance

**too much too young – teen programmes**

by kids for kids

# 1 production

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# introduction

Anna Home

As Chair of the Second World Summit on Television for Children, **Anna Home** welcomed delegates from around the world. Appropriately, this opening day coincided with the 70th birthday of one of children's television's staunchest supporters, **Peggy Charren**, now Visiting Scholar in Education at Harvard University. Home presented her with a gift and asked the audience to show their appreciation for Charren's contribution as founder of the American lobby group, Action for Children's Television.

Home began by explaining that the proposal for the UK to host the Second World Summit had come from Channel 4 at the end of the Melbourne Summit in 1995. Since that event there had been two regional Summits – the first held in Manila in 1996 which focused on Asia; the second in Ghana in 1997 which covered children's television in Africa.

Having reminded delegates of the Children's Television Charter, redrafted after the First World Summit in Melbourne in 1995 and adapted for regional purposes at the Asia and Africa Summits, Home highlighted the key findings of research into the Charter's role. In brief, this demonstrated widespread support for the principles of the Charter, but a lack of clarity about its implementation (see page 108 for fuller report).

Home then introduced the main themes of the Second World Summit – funding, regulation, co-production and new media – and drew delegates' attention to the masterclasses, regional forums and the daily summary to be provided by an agent provocateur. Before handing over to the opening session, she let children have their say in a short excerpt from a BBC programme, *As Seen on TV*, specially commissioned for the Summit.

# tv on trial: the child audience – do we know what it is?

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAIR | Sarah Dunant broadcaster and novelist, UK |
| SPEAKERS | Douglas Rushkoff writer, USA |
| | Philip Pullman writer, UK |
| | Tony Charlton Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, UK |
| | Alice Cahn PBS, USA |
| | Ada Haug NRK, Norway |
| | Nigel Lythgoe LWT, UK |
| | Dr Anura Goonasekera Asian Media Information and Communication Centre, Singapore |
| PRODUCER | Andrew Macbean and Jane Millichip ITEL, UK |
| SPONSOR | The Jim Henson Company |

In introducing the opening session, its chair, UK broadcaster and novelist **Sarah Dunant**, explained that because of the wide brief – are we giving children what they want or what they think they want? – the following two and a half hours would be divided into three parts: how children as an audience are changing, the current trends in children's programming and, thirdly, how far programme-makers are managing to meet children's needs.

**New audiences?**

The first topic was the impact of new media and whether this meant that the way in which television addresses children should change. 'Are we perhaps being pushed into new formats and new ideas because we're scared of being left behind while ignoring some fundamental, universal tenets of structure, narrative, shape and content that ought still to be our guiding light?' asked Dunant, before welcoming the morning's first guest speaker, **Douglas Rushkoff**, American media writer and novelist.

Rushkoff's argument was that children are far less of a captive audience than ever before, now that they have 'media inventions' such as the remote control, the Sega joystick and the computer keyboard and mouse, all of which turn the television from 'a space that was reserved for the magician' to 'a place where normal people can play'. Whereas broadcasters still seek to programme viewers through the oldest device of all, that of storytelling with narrative and characters, now young viewers understand the language of media better than the programmers themselves. Children's instinct is to resist such efforts to programme them into submission and instead use television to find out about the world. To them, *The Simpsons*, *Beavis and Butthead* and even *Teletubbies* are all about being aware of television as a medium rather than being drawn in by it. In Rushkoff's opinion, broadcasters must wake up to the fact that 'children are from an older, more advanced culture than we are ... and really have to be treated as such.'

**Philip Pullman**, British children's writer, took a different view. To him, children 'only want what they already know'. Thus, instead of giving them what we think they want, we should give them what we know they need, in other words stories, best of all fairy tales, folk tales, myths and legends. In order to achieve this, the storyteller must have three essential talents: 'We have to find something interesting, put the camera in the best place to see it clearly and then get out of the way.'

Making a wider point, however, Pullman spoke of his horror of stupidity, symptoms of which are a tendency to patronise the television audience and a worship of the market: 'Stupidity is the great enemy of us all. Ignorance is treatable, incapacity is innocent, but stupidity is criminal. If the market really did rule everything, what would there be to discuss? We'd all be at home selling our souls for the highest prices we could get.'

> *'Stupidity is the greatest enemy of us all.'*

This concept of stupidity was recognised in particular by **Professor Bhaskara Rao**, Chairman of the Centre for Media Studies in New Delhi, speaking from the floor, who agreed with Dunant's suggestion that the next generation of children will not necessarily be defined by their native culture but by technology. In fact, he felt this was even more evident in developing countries such as India where people are increasingly aware of the impact of television.

Despite challenges from the chair, Rushkoff and Pullman stuck to their main viewpoints about television's role. According to Pullman, the power of narrative, linear or fractured, had not changed, but the multiplicity of channels was affecting



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television's capacity as a storyteller. He also noted that, whereas children are less able to produce narrative, they are becoming increasingly adept at writing dialogue. Rushkoff, while agreeing about children's thirst for narrative, did not trust television to tell a story and considered it more of a surveillance medium on the rest of the world. Because television was now such a large part of culture, especially in the USA, the most compelling television was about television itself.

Sarah Dunant chairing the opening session

Asked to contribute from his recent observation of a society touched by television for the first time, **Tony Charlton**, Professor in Education at Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, UK, felt that the one-to-one relationship engendered by a story told in written form was probably irreplaceable. Key findings from his research on the impact on children of bringing television to the small British colony of St Helena in the South Atlantic were not due out until April 1998, but initial indications were that children's social behaviour had not been significantly affected.

**Milton Chen**, Director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation in California, pointed out that new technology was already enabling children to make their own television and tell their own stories. **Carla Seal-Wanner** from @ccess4 @ll in New York expressed a hope that the debate would not divide over a rather conservative notion of storytelling when in fact the new media could open up many rich forms to both children and adults. **Robert Hirshon**, Executive Producer with the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, asked how Rushkoff could reconcile the idea of children resisting the power of television with the billion-dollar success of *Power Rangers* merchandise. Here again, Rushkoff felt that the only story involved was that created by the toys themselves and that this was what had won over children. He agreed that we live in a marketing culture and so 'the way to disseminate something through culture is by somehow turning that engine of marketing on itself.'

**Vesna Sudar**, a television buyer from Zagreb, drew a parallel between television and the calculator. Would children forget how to think and how to make a story in the same way that they forgot how to add and subtract? Pullman agreed there was a danger that a fractured approach to life stood in the way of understanding the structure of a long narrative, an important element of which was the occasional boring passage. Meanwhile, Rushkoff countered that the primary emotion was anger if children felt they were being manipulated by coercive programming they did not trust.

### Teletubbies

Moving on, Dunant introduced the second theme and the first real mention of a programme likely to dominate much discussion during the week: *Teletubbies*. 'Are they wiseing up or dumbing down?' she asked.

First to speak on the topic was **Alice Cahn**, Director of Children's Programming on PBS in the USA, who, having bought the programme for her network, was inevitably a passionate supporter of what she described as 'the most old-fashioned, new-fangled programme for young children I've ever seen.' Suspecting that grown-ups have had a memory lapse about what they enjoyed as children, she praised *Teletubbies* producer Anne Wood and its commissioning editor Anna Home, then Head of Children's Television at the BBC, for never having lost that magic. For her, *Teletubbies* was based on the natural activities of the child audience, using humour to address their specific cognitive, physical and social needs. Contrary to the view that it represented a homogenisation of culture, she felt that *Teletubbies* reflected a universal understanding of the developmental processes experienced by children.

> *'Teletubbies is the most market-oriented children's programme I've ever seen.'*

In explaining why she did *not* buy *Teletubbies*, **Ada Haug**, Head of Pre-school Programmes at NRK in Norway, expressed the sentiment that a good children's programme is a mixture of a tool and a toy, a meaningful and entertaining asset to a child's development. She could not see *Teletubbies* as responding to children's needs and was worried by the idea that they were being invited into an alien-looking world with some alien-looking baby-like creatures talking a baby language. While praising the series' beautiful colours, clear design and funny devices, she criticised what she saw as poor production values in the live action films shown via the Teletubbies' own television screens.



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Repetition could be good for very small children but, in this case, 'repetition of what? No story, no development in action, no conclusion, only a set of visual and acoustic rituals.' Above all, she highlighted the series' lack of specific cultural identifications which allowed it, in her view, to travel easily around the world: '*Teletubbies* is the most market-oriented children's programme concept I've ever seen.'

Continuing her spirited defence of the programme, Cahn at one point called her fellow speaker an 'ignorant slut', much to the astonishment of an audience unaware that this was apparently a joking reference to a catchphrase from the American comedy programme *Saturday Night Live* and was not intended to cause offence. Dunant turned to psychologist Charlton who echoed the positive 'pro-social' aspects of the programme, especially watched with parents. Similarly, a producer from South Africa was glad that little children had somewhere to go, away from constant news of war and strife. In stark contrast, **Jean MacCurdy**, President of Warner Bros TV Animation, quoted as having called *Teletubbies* 'vaguely evil', suggested that it was projecting a false image. This was endorsed by **Brenda Kali**, Commissioning Editor from the South African Broadcasting Corporation, by **Patricia Edgar**, Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation, who called it regressive, and by **Dr Tom Adaba**, Director General of the National Broadcasting Commission of Nigeria, who criticised its lack of reality for Third World children who needed something that would enrich their own culture.

Asked to defend her programme, producer **Anne Wood**, Creative Director at Ragdoll in the UK, expressed delight that programming for pre-school children had for once become the focus of debate. She explained that *Teletubbies* was targeted at children between the ages of two and four and that she had been as surprised as everyone else to learn of babies watching it. However, research findings had been positive in highlighting the developmental aspect of the speech content.

Pondering on the scale of controversy created by *Teletubbies*, Dunant wondered whether there was a sense that, having lost the battle over older children's programming, there was anxiety about producing the right kind of material for an age group which represented a real innocence. Wood was of the view that people just did not see or listen to little children and so were unaware of their world and its dangers. She hoped that her programme gave children self-confidence but above all wanted to allow them to enjoy themselves: 'They have a great capacity for huge enjoyment. It's such a pity if we don't allow them some time, especially when they're very small, simply to be joyful.'

## Adult attractions

Dunant moved discussion on to the third topic with a clip from *Gladiators* and the question of why children often find adult programmes more interesting than those designed specifically for them.

According to the first speaker, **Nigel Lythgoe**, Controller of Light Entertainment at LWT in the UK, 21 percent of the children's audience watch *Gladiators*. Showing clips of other high-rating programmes such as *Ice Warriors*, he explained that 14 out of the top 20 programmes watched by adults with their children were on Saturday nights. In his view, it was not so much the programmes themselves but the fact that, even in multi-channel households, television still has the ability to bring the family together, especially on that night of the week: 'Shared television helps bond the family and is particularly important for fathers. Everyone expects Saturday night to be special.'

**Dr Anura Goonasekera**, Head of Research at the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre in Singapore, saw something of the 'pornographer's logic' in the idea that children should be given more of what they like in the form of adult programmes. He felt that this had more to do with producing television programmes to a commercial imperative rather than devoting resources to producing good-quality children's television on a non-profit basis: 'Unless there is a distinct policy to produce quality children's programmes, we will never be able to get out of this vicious circle.'

**Lorraine Heggessey**, Head of Children's Programmes at the BBC, wanted to avoid confusion between programmes watched by children in adult times and those made specifically for them. For the former, the 9pm watershed acted as a signal for any adults wanting to police their children's viewing. For the latter, she felt it important that children should see a reflection of their own world and its moral dilemmas from their own perspective. Picking up on mention on the watershed Dunant expressed the concern that parents could not possibly do all the controlling, while Charlton regretted the passing of a sense of community which would involve parental influence and mediation. For the final word, Dunant went to **Peggy Charren**, Visiting Scholar in Education at Harvard University and founder of the US lobby group Action for Children's Television, who suggested that broadcaster responsibility was a far better option than that often imposed – government censorship.

***A barn-storming start to the summit.***
**Michael Forte** agent provocateur

# family programmes – friend or foe?

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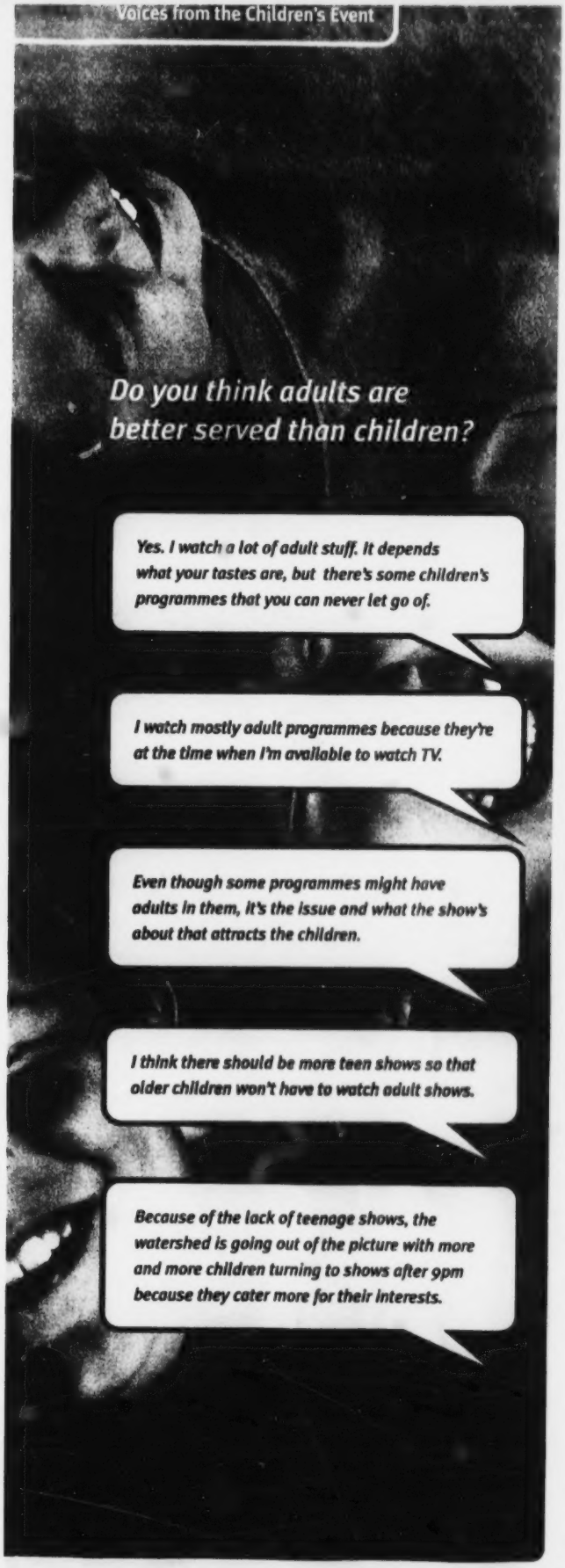
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | John Willis United Film and Television Productions, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Adrian Mills CBC Television, Canada |
| | Sunil Doshi Alliance Media and Entertainment, India |
| | Herb Scannell Nickelodeon, USA |
| | Albert Schäfer Kinderkanal, Germany |
| **PRODUCER** | Steven Andrew BBC |
| **SPONSOR** | Goethe Institut |

Could family programmes seriously endanger quality television? As channels proliferate and commercial pressure intensifies, are broadcasters finding themselves forced away from children's programmes into broader-based and perhaps more lucrative family programmes? Before turning to his speakers, chair **John Willis**, Managing Director of United Film and Television Productions in the UK, showed a short specially-commissioned film indicating what life could be like for a children's programme-maker whose best intentions had been thwarted by the demands of the market. As her careful plans for a children's drama series crashed about her ears, she asked, 'What about the children?' The answer: 'We don't want kids in it. I hear they can be notoriously difficult to work with.'

**Adrian Mills**, Creative Head of Children's and Youth Programming at CBC Television in Canada, began by apologising for being one of an all-male panel when his experience of children's television was of being managed by women. With 98 per cent of Canada on cable and 80 channels available to subscribers, he explained that children had a tremendous range of programming to choose from, some of it in the form of specialist children's channels. His own department at CBC, itself a public broadcaster part funded by advertising, broadcasts about 24 hours a week of children's material, some of which is acquired. For him, the issue was, quite simply, one of money. Although he believed 'wholeheartedly in the idea of the voice of the child', he knew this argument would cut no ice in an organisation focused on adults which begrudgingly allocated some of its funds to children. Clearly the same debate wouldn't occur in a dedicated children's channel – to his mind, the way forward. 'I can't afford children's drama, but I can access the primetime drama pot and, more significantly, primetime broadcast when children are available to watch, by proposing child-centred dramas. I think our main goal should be to produce and broadcast high-quality dramas that feature children, that reflect children's lives and interests and engage children. It doesn't matter to me whether it's called family programming or children's programming.'

Television as a 'shared family experience' is largely still the norm in India, but for a different reason. **Sunil Doshi**, Chief Executive of Alliance Media and Entertainment, explained that until the last couple of years there had been virtually no programming made specifically for children in India, despite the fact that 30 per cent of its one billion population are under 15. He attributed this largely to a lack of recognition of children's particular needs and, therefore, of writers and other specialists equipped to cater for them. Around 57 million households have television, 15 million of which receive cable and satellite channels. On the terrestrial channels, nearly two-thirds of the content is film-based, often relating to great Indian epics, with the rest comprising entertainment, cartoons, sports and, lastly, children's material. The 'invasion' of cable and satellite since the early 1990s had changed patterns of viewing, particularly in urban areas, and offered children something entirely new, at the same time provoking some concerns about its influence on the part of parents: 'The exposure to foreign satellite television is forging a whole new cultural identity for many children.' Doshi concluded by showing a sample of the material available in India – clips from MTV, an adaptation of an Oscar Wilde ghost story for children and the first-ever indigenous puppet animation made by the National Centre of Films for Children and Young People.

In contrast, **Herb Scannell**, President of Nickelodeon in the USA, talked of his channel's 19-year-old commitment to 'put kids first'. His feeling was that the American networks had abandoned children in primetime; broadcasters weren't 'broad' any more, but were targeting 18- to 50-year-olds with disposable income. This had provided Nickelodeon with an opportunity to replace its 'Nick at Night' family shows with children's shows at 8pm, resulting in a larger child audience at that time than for any other other cable network, and a decision to extend this 'children's time' for a further half-hour to 9pm. Having always had a 'kid-centred focus' in a multi-channel world, Nickelodeon's philosophy was to reflect children's points of view in contrast to some more traditional approaches which might simply surround an adult star with children: 'At Nickelodeon, if you make a programme, you're not going to feel great about that programme until you've actually shown it to kids. We have always used kids as both the way that we start looking at our programme choices and the way we finish.' An example of this will be the channel's Project 2000, called Nickelennium, designed to involve 2,000 children from around the world talking about the future.


Do you think adults are better served than children?
Yes. I watch a lot of adult stuff. It depends what your tastes are, but there's some children's programmes that you can never let go of.
I watch mostly adult programmes because they're at the time when I'm available to watch TV.
Even though some programmes might have adults in them, it's the issue and what the show's about that attracts the children.
I think there should be more teen shows so that older children won't have to watch adult shows.
Because of the lack of teenage shows, the watershed is going out of the picture with more and more children turning to shows after 9pm because they cater more for their interests.

The final speaker was **Albert Schäfer**, Managing Director of Kinderkanal in Germany, whose feeling was that although children loved to watch programmes made for a wider audience, broadcasters had a responsiblity to 'save a space called children's programmes and not family programmes' in the face of the fragmenting television market. Convinced that 'a modern channel has to be a special interest channel', he recounted the evolution of Kinderkanal, the only publicly-funded specialist children's channel.

> *'Children's television has to concentrate on the children's needs. Any other attempt will not succeed.'*

In the past, both public broadcasters in Germany, ARD and ZDF, had shown about ten hours of children's programmes weekly, of undisputed quality but low in quantity. The late 1980s brought strong competition from new privately-owned channels offering programmes targeted at children, but also criticism for their violent content and extensive commercial breaks.

Against this background, ARD and ZDF drew on their expertise to launch Kinderkanal. Available free via cable and satellite, it covers about 70 per cent of households and offers 11 hours of programming for children each day and 13 hours at weekends. Without any commercial backing in the form of advertising or sponsorship, its cost, drawn from the licence fee, is approximately ten pence per month for each household. In addition to classics from ARD and ZDF, it shows a daily news programme for children, many of its own productions, three feature films each week and acquired programming including cartoons, which amount to 30 per cent of the output.

According to Schäfer, the channel has achieved a high market share and a very positive reaction from the public since its launch in January 1997, leading him to believe that 'children's television has to concentrate on the children's needs. Any other attempt will not succeed.'





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# when I was very young

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|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Moneeza Hashmi Pakistan TV Corporation |
| **SPEAKERS** | Rene Villanueva Philippines Children's Television Foundation |
| | Toyoko Hirata NHK, Japan |
| | Zehra Gokdeniz Turkish Radio Television Corporation |
| | Anne Wood Ragdoll Productions, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Judy Whitfield consultant, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | Yoram Gross Village Roadshow |

The focus of this session was on programming for the pre-school audience. How much should we tell our children? How does a concerned programme-maker balance the negative aspects of the fears of this world with the more positive role models of caring and loving behaviour? As chair, **Moneeza Hashmi**, Executive Producer for children, youth and women with the Pakistan TV Corporation, welcomed the opportunity to hear views from professional colleagues working in very different cultures, religions and traditions. First, though, she showed some brief examples of output from ten different countries covering subjects from divorce and abuse to imaginary monsters in the loo and the delight of rolling down hills.

First to speak was **Rene Villanueva**, Creative Director for the Philippines Children's Television Foundation, whose programme *Batibot*, included in the clips, had won a Prix Jeunesse. He explained that this particular programme, addressed at children between four and six years of age, had been on air for 14 years. A 'TV magazine with an agenda', the show addresses both the needs of this age group but also tackles what he called a 'hidden curriculum', in other words the problems of identity and Philippino culture. For this reason it is broadcast in Philippino, the national language, rather than English, the language of prestige, and at times deals with issues affecting children such as the environment, child labour, sexual abuse and children's rights.

Originally of the opinion that the inclusion of such content was a matter of choice for most broadcasters, Villanueva had since learnt that some producers in the Asia and Pacific regions simply did not have that privilege because of constraints imposed by their political, cultural or commercial environment. In his view, however, it was actually more a matter of right for children: 'They have the right to be informed about the subject, to be protected from the dangerous,' in a way appropriate for their age group.

**Toyoko Hirata**, Senior Programme Director of the Family Programmes Division at NHK in Japan, defined the pre-school audience as being from zero to five years old, living in a very protected environment under constant supervision. The emphasis of NHK's programme *Let's Play with Mother* is on encouragement rather than teaching: 'Our goal is to suggest and to stimulate the positive awareness in children's everyday activities.' Following Ministry of Education guidelines and the advice of a consultative committee of educationalists, psychologists and researchers, the programme focuses on health and well-being, personal relationships, environmental concerns and self-expression. Feeling that children's programmes had to be cautious in terms of their effects on personality development, she explained that controversial issues would be covered for an adult audience in primetime so that they could then answer their children's questions more adequately.

> *'Children have the right to be informed about the subject, to be protected from the dangerous.'*

In Turkey, the television set could take the role of a kindergarten in those homes where the children did not attend a class, according to **Zehra Gokdeniz**, Head of the Children's Programming Department of the Turkish Radio Television Corporation. Except for the recently arrived Nickelodeon, TRT One was the only channel to offer pre-school programmes to children aged between three and five. She described the attitude of the average Turkish family as protective and affectionate towards children, with parents preferring not to talk about bad things even if they thought they were capable of doing so – which many did not. Thus broadcasters felt a responsibility both to endorse this protective approach but also to 'fill in the blanks'. Using a magazine format, 'our approach is to follow the child's curiosity and emotion' introducing more difficult subjects such as death and divorce as a way of preparing them for later life.

As in the opening session of the Summit, **Anne Wood**, Creative Director of Ragdoll Productions in the UK and producer of



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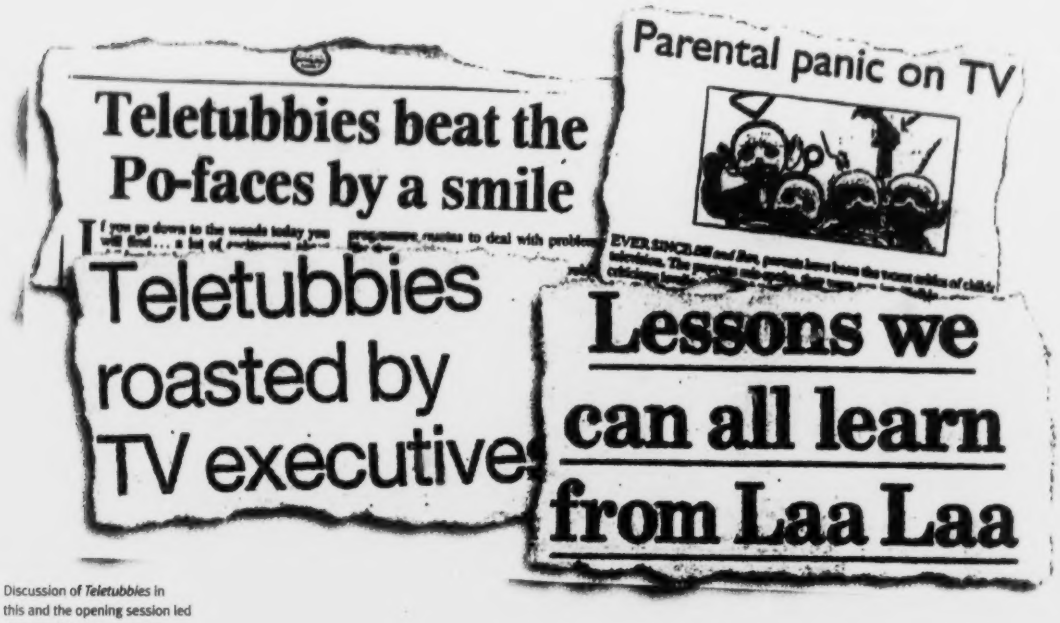
Teletubbies beat the Po-faces by a smile
Parental panic on TV
Teletubbies roasted by TV executives
Lessons we can all learn from Laa Laa

Discussion of *Teletubbies* in this and the opening session led to extensive press coverage.

*Teletubbies*, reiterated her ambition to make television that very young children will recognise as being meant for them. It should present the world from their perspective, giving them strength and confidence through reassurance. Sensing that people were tending to get the role of television out of perspective, she felt that 'it is neither the cause of nor is it the answer to the world's ills.' Indeed, to little children, for whom television is one of the first and probably the most exciting pieces of technology they discover, it is both a mirror and a window.

Wood's feeling was that the UK was fortunate in having had a tradition of programme-making for the under-fives since the 1950s. There was now a generation of parents who had grown up with this and who remembered it for its warmth and fun: 'I believe that deep down that is what they most want for their children. They want television to be a source of play.'

The cultural differences were demonstrated still further in the discussion that followed, with Hashmi emphasising the point that strict censorship made it impossible for programme-makers in countries such as her own to even touch more sensitive subjects. Similarly, they were working in the dark when it came to research statistics, with few Asian countries really having a clear idea of the actual audience for their programmes.

Pressed about the treatment of difficult subject matter in his programme *Batibot*, Villanueva explained that the basic guideline was not to shy away from sad stories. Stressing that the example shown, which had dealt with abuse within a family, was not representative of the majority of programmes, he outlined the way in which the material had been tested on parents and older age groups, some of whom had wanted the programme to be even more explicit in case the younger children did not understand. Feeling that this would be 'treading on dangerous ground', the programme-makers had not taken this advice and had found that for the four to six-year-olds it was sufficient to know that there were some adults and actions which they might not like. They had, however, changed the perpetrator of the child abuse from a father to an uncle, not wanting to demonise fathers and thus weaken the family unit.

*'I believe that deep down that is what parents most want for their children. They want television to be a source of play.'*

Even when focusing on topics such as death or separation, Villanueva felt that it was important to communicate a sense of optimism, a view shared by Wood, whose approach was otherwise so different. Making a plea for programmes to 'take some of the anxiety away' from little children's lives, she nevertheless felt that, contrary to people's fears, they would not sit in front of anything and absorb it: 'If it doesn't mean anything to them they will walk away.' Indeed, much depended upon the context in which small children were watching television, alone or together with their parents, in which case **Kalle Fürst**, Head of the Children's Department at NRK in Norway, felt that there was 'an opportunity to really deal with every kind of problem'. Against such different cultural backgrounds, however, Hashmi concluded that 'we all have to find our own formulas and our own way of handling it.'



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# the role of children's television in human rights education

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|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Lucinda Whiteley PolyGram Visual Programming, UK |
| **SPEAKER** | Mary Robinson UN High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **SPONSOR** | CBC Television |

Mary Robinson

**Lucinda Whiteley**, Senior Vice President of PolyGram Visual Programming the UK, introduced the first keynote speaker as both a former president and mother of three children. **Mary Robinson**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights since June 1997, had been involved in human rights issues throughout her career as a lawyer, senator and latterly head of state of the Republic of Ireland, during which time she placed particular emphasis on the needs of developing countries.

Robinson's aim was to engage her audience in a partnership around the idea of using the power of television to convey messages, even in the poorer parts of the world. She did so by showing examples from UNICEF's *Cartoons for Children's Rights*, a series of 100 30-second animations made by studios around the world, each focusing on a particular article from the UN Convention. First was an item about child labour, designed to involve its audience, both young and old, in caring about children and their conditions. How about showing this to the millions of children sitting with their parents watching the World Cup during the summer?

Second was an award-winning cartoon clip about a child's right to express itself and also the willingness of the adult to listen and learn. Third, the right of the child to play, and finally, again, the importance of being able to express opinions, however individual and non-conformist. Explaining that these cartoons were available free from UNICEF except for the cost of the tape, Robinson hoped that delegates would be able to show these on national television throughout the world and also in schools. 'Often when we talk about the child and the media, we talk in terms of being worried,' she said, 'worried about violence, worried about the way in which children may be affected. And we're right to worry, because children aren't born with hatred, with fear, with prejudice, and one of the factors that greatly influences their environment is television. So the message conveyed by you, the messenger, is extremely important.'

The response to such messages would not be immediate, but the point about human rights education was that it was for the medium and long-term future: 'It is probably the most powerful way of preparing the next generation for the commitments of our global world.'

Those producing programmes for children had the opportunity to communicate directly with children and their parents and it was their responsibility to do this using television's potential for good. Although UNICEF was working through its committee to monitor progress in each country, she said, 'You can cut right through all of that into the sitting room, into the kitchen, into the bedroom. I put it to you that this World Summit should recommit everybody involved in children's television to understanding how much it can empower children.'

> *'I put it to you that this World Summit should recommit everybody involved in children's television to understanding how much it can empower children.'*

Contributors from the floor spoke warmly about the role of UNICEF and the importance of taking a positive approach to human rights issues and how they can be addressed.

In turn, Robinson was encouraged by the examples of how broadcasters had tackled subjects such as child labour and other issues affecting children with honesty and openness: 'I want simply to encourage that trend,' she concluded.



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# global understanding, local survival – finding the balance

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| **CHAIR** | Gillian Reynolds broadcaster and journalist, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Moneeza Hashmi Pakistan TV Corporation |
| | Dr Katarína Minichová Slovak Television |
| | Hélène Fatou Conseil Superieur de l'Audiovisuel, France |
| | Jean MacCurdy Warner Bros,USA |
| | Dr André Caron University of Montreal, Canada |
| **PRODUCER** | Sandra Hastie Richmond Films and Television, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | The British Council |

Which programme, made by Nickelodeon, has been sold to 101 countries including Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Iceland, Pakistan and the Lebanon?
*Rugrats.*

Which, made by NBC, has been shown in 79 countries including Chile, Cyprus, Israel and the Ivory Coast?
*Saved by the Bell.*

Which, made by Warner Bros, has been translated into 135 languages including German, Portuguese and Norwegian?
*Pinky and the Brain.*

Finally, which programme, made by Scholastic, has been shown in 38 countries including Spain, France and Germany?
*Goosebumps.*

Having opened the session with clips from each of these four programmes, among the most successful children's television around the world, the chair, UK broadcaster and journalist **Gillian Reynolds** introduced the topic for debate: the question of how to achieve a balance between global understanding and the survival of local programming.

The first speaker, **Moneeza Hashmi**, Executive Producer for children, youth and women with the Pakistan TV Corporation, explained that, despite having had television in Pakistan for 34 years, it still did not reach every corner of the country. She described the three television channels as follows: PTV One, the regional channel, which broadcasts in Urdu and other national languages and produces local and indigenous programming; the 24-hour commercial satellite channel PTV Two, which beams a mix of English and Urdu programming to over 30 countries around the world; and another private channel, STN, which broadcasts CNN except during primetime when the screen is filled with mass-market entertainment and drama – 'literally anything that sells' according to Hashmi.

Having made the point that television is under strict controls, Hashmi regretted that the country's broadcasters had been subject to some short-sighted political decisions which had made it difficult to develop a coherent information policy. They had been compelled, for instance, to use the national language Urdu for all broadcasting for about a decade from the late 1970s, until it was decided to restore English with the advent of the democratic government.

At the end of the 20th century, Hashmi felt that no broadcaster could operate in isolation, particularly in an era of satellite and cable channels. But how could Asian countries such as Pakistan begin to compete 'with the global invasion of programmes that are ... seeping their way into our homes? We want to be part of the world, but not at the cost of stamping out or trampling or even denying the very fact that we have a heritage that we are proud of, a culture, a tradition, a religion.' They therefore wanted help in the form of co-production, training and ideas, but not to the extent of being overwhelmed: 'Just give us space,' she said.

A parallel perspective was provided by the second speaker, **Dr Katarína Minichová**, Deputy Head of Children's and Youth Programmes from Slovakia Television in Bratislava. 'Once upon a time,' she began, there was a continuity within television production for children in Slovakia, with particular emphasis on the fairy tale, both in the form of drama and animation, an example of which she showed. Although homemade programmes are still in the majority, there began to be a change in the mid- to late-1980s when imported animation began appearing – first the Disney-style *Rabbit and the Wolf* from Russia, then *Tom and Jerry* from America, followed by many more new characters.

In contrast to their home-grown counterparts, they were quicker and more violent, and the audience loved them. Almost imperceptibly, tastes changed as these imported programmes

Would it matter if TV only came from one culture?
We want different things from all over the world.
I think that would be a very bad idea. I think that local programmes are very important as well.
The problem with only having one country is you'll get one country's humour, one country's thought, one country's everything. You're only getting one side of the story.
If you have TV coming from one place in the world and only that place, then how they feel about different issues will come with the TV. You might get the TV's mindset because it influences people so easily.
I think it does matter because we need shows that show our culture and our language.

began to dominate. Well aware that this situation could not be stopped altogether, the Slovak policy is now to rebuild confidence in the indigenous culture by creating a stronge strain of original programmes. Minichová's feeling was that 'the model of exchange should become stronger than the mechanism of buying' and that broadcasters should work in partnership 'on universal themes whilst retaining their own specific cultural identity'. In that way, the phrase 'once upon a time' could become familiar again, all over the world.

The regulator on the panel, **Hélène Fatou**, a member of the Conseil Superieur de l'Audovisuel in France, and previously a programme-maker in children's television, referred to the English language as the 'Esperanto' of the television world and to its symbiotic relationship with what she called American hegemony. After all, it would be far simpler to buy and transmit solely American product now that McDonalds and Coca Cola are a daily reality for children in most parts of the world. And speaking of uniformity, why stop at language? Her point was that a diversity of tastes, interests and temperament was part of the wealth of humanity – 'Each country must pay attention to preserving its own culture on which its individuality and character is based' – and that language was a key factor in the transmission of this to future generations, complete with all its nuances and richness. Dubbing French programmes in English, for example, in her view often led to an impoverishment of the original text because English was more concise in its expression.

Without wanting to 'demonise' the English language, Fatou felt that its spread worldwide could actually prove to be its own downfall, through which it could lose some of its own 'soul'. It ran the risk of being over-simplified, for instance, when used by speakers for none of whom it was their first language or to homogenise what was really a multicultural marketplace.

Clearly, it was impossible to learn all the languages of the planet in order to understand each other. In her eyes, it was therefore beneficial for children to learn English as a language of exchange, but also essential for them to be able to speak, write, sing and tell stories in their own tongue.



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Reynolds described the career path of the fourth speaker as one that 'any woman in any television organisation would envy'. **Jean MacCurdy**, President of Warner Bros TV Animation in the USA, had worked as a programme-maker at NBC and Hanna Barbera as well as Warner Bros, before eventually becoming President of the latter in 1992. Wearing her producer's hat, she was proud of the American programming she had made. She admitted that she needed the money generated by the international marketplace in order to fund high-quality programming, but nevertheless saw her native land as her first responsibility: 'I need to have a competitive programme in the American marketplace, but I do think about the international market when I make shows.' She cited the example of a 65 half-hour series called *Histeria*, currently in production, which is tackling topics from all over the globe both for the home and overseas markets.

> *'We want to be part of the world, but not at the cost of stamping out or trampling or even denying the very fact that we have a heritage that we are proud of, a culture, a tradition, a religion.'*

*Kids WB!*, part of Warner Bros' fledgling network, transmits 19 hours of children's programming a week, three hours on weekdays and four hours on Saturday morning. As a buyer, MacCurdy put out a challenge to the international community to find a show that would bring other ideas and other cultures into the American marketplace to attract an American audience: 'The global understanding does indeed go both ways and I think it's an important point for us Americans as broadcasters to realise. It really shouldn't be a one-way street.'

The final speaker was **Dr André Caron**, Director of the Center of Youth and Media Studies at the University of Montreal – in his own self-deprecating words, 'the dry, dull academic with the low-tech visuals'. He described a study undertaken with a small Inuit community in northern Quebec in which two groups of children aged between eight and 14, both of whom had never seen television, were exposed over a one-week period to either a 'southern' product from America or a northern series, broadcast in their native language. Children who saw only the native series demonstrated little increase in cultural knowledge but rather a reinforcement of their values, while those viewing the US series showed an increase in knowledge of other cultures but little decrease in their own cultural identity. Given the choice, the children chose the American series, although they had evidently enjoyed the Inuit series. Meanwhile parents, when offered the same choices, preferred the native series, perhaps indicating a different generational interest in foreign and local content and a greater awareness of the language barrier. Caron concluded that foreign content could, therefore, have a positive effect, although it was even more important to have 'strong and abundant' local programming.

Caron's second study concerned an analysis of data for English- and French-speaking children living in Montreal which revealed that the presence of specialist channels had a direct upward effect on their viewing habits. According to regulatory requirements, over half of the children's programming from 'conventional' broadcasters was local in origin, particularly in the case of the French-language channels. However, he was well aware that, despite quite a positive environment, this local content was still vulnerable.

From the floor, **Kathleen McDonnell**, Canadian author of *Kid Culture*, was not too worried that children from all over the world cited American programmes as their favourites: 'I'm very torn about this whole question of diversity and homogeneity. I guess maybe some of you find it scary that *The Simpsons* is this cultural glue. A lot of it we see as American culture, but this is actually forming a common basis for understanding that I don't think we've seen before.' Perhaps, too, it was a generational preoccupation. She quoted a junior delegate from one of the children's masterclasses who had seen no contradiction in the fact that her two favourite shows were *The Simpsons* and a Gaelic show made in Edinburgh.

There was a feeling among the audience that it was particularly important for younger children to be addressed in their native language and thus to have locally made programmes. At the same time, it was recognised that children did not just pick up on language but on the 'feel' of a programme and whether, as in the case of *Teletubbies*, it was essentially English or American. Others felt that whereas language could be dubbed, it was the alien images that could constitute a 'cultural invasion' to those who found them unfamiliar. With many issues still to be discussed, the session had to close.



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# too much too young – teen programmes

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| **CHAIR** | Franklin Getchell Getchell Intellectual, USA |
| **SPEAKERS** | Rachel Purnell producer, UK<br>Ellen Levy-Sarnoff UPN, USA<br>Yu Peixia CCTV, China |
| **PRODUCERS** | Lisa Opie and Amelia Johnson Trouble, UK |

Sex, drugs and alcohol. Whose standards should we apply as we look at the programming that is made for teens? Should we look at it from the point of view of needing to protect children or should we look at it with adult standards in mind? Or, since it's so difficult to do anyway, should we bother at all?

Calling his approach to the session 'softly radical', the chair **Franklin Getchell**, President of the US media branding consultancy Getchell Intellectual, explained that his main intention was to encourage contributions from a wide range of people, with the panellists merely giving a sense of the state of teen and youth programming in their own countries as a starting-point. He also drew attention to the views of teenagers provided by the Internet which were posted up around the room.

Talking about youth programming in the UK, producer **Rachel Purnell** pointed to its birth in the late 1980s. At this point, both Channel 4 and the BBC, where she had worked, had commissioning editors responsible for the 16-24 age group, budgets and scheduling opportunities were available, particularly for entertainment and factual programmes, and producers were encouraged to experiment and even fail in their attempts to break the mould. Initially derided by mainstream programme-makers for their alternative approach, these programmes gradually lost their 'fashionable' image until many of their themes and presentation ideas were taken up more generally. More recently, the terrestrial channels have tended to tack youth programming on to their children's departments, with the older age group being thought of as adults. Although a small amount of programming for the teenage audience remains on these terrestrial channels, they are mainly catered for by the cable and satellite channels such as MTV, where she worked until 1997, Nickelodeon and Disney. Particularly noticeable is the American 'skew' to so much material, even in the UK.

Similarly, **Ellen Levy-Sarnoff**, Vice-President of Children's Programming on the American United Paramount Network (UPN) since its launch in 1995, felt that teen programming was still a fairly limited area in the USA. In her view, the most popular teen shows were *Party of Five* and *Beverly Hills 90210* from Fox and *Dawson's Creek* from Columbia Tristar, while the most popular mainstream shows were *King of the Hill, Seinfeld* and *The Simpsons*.

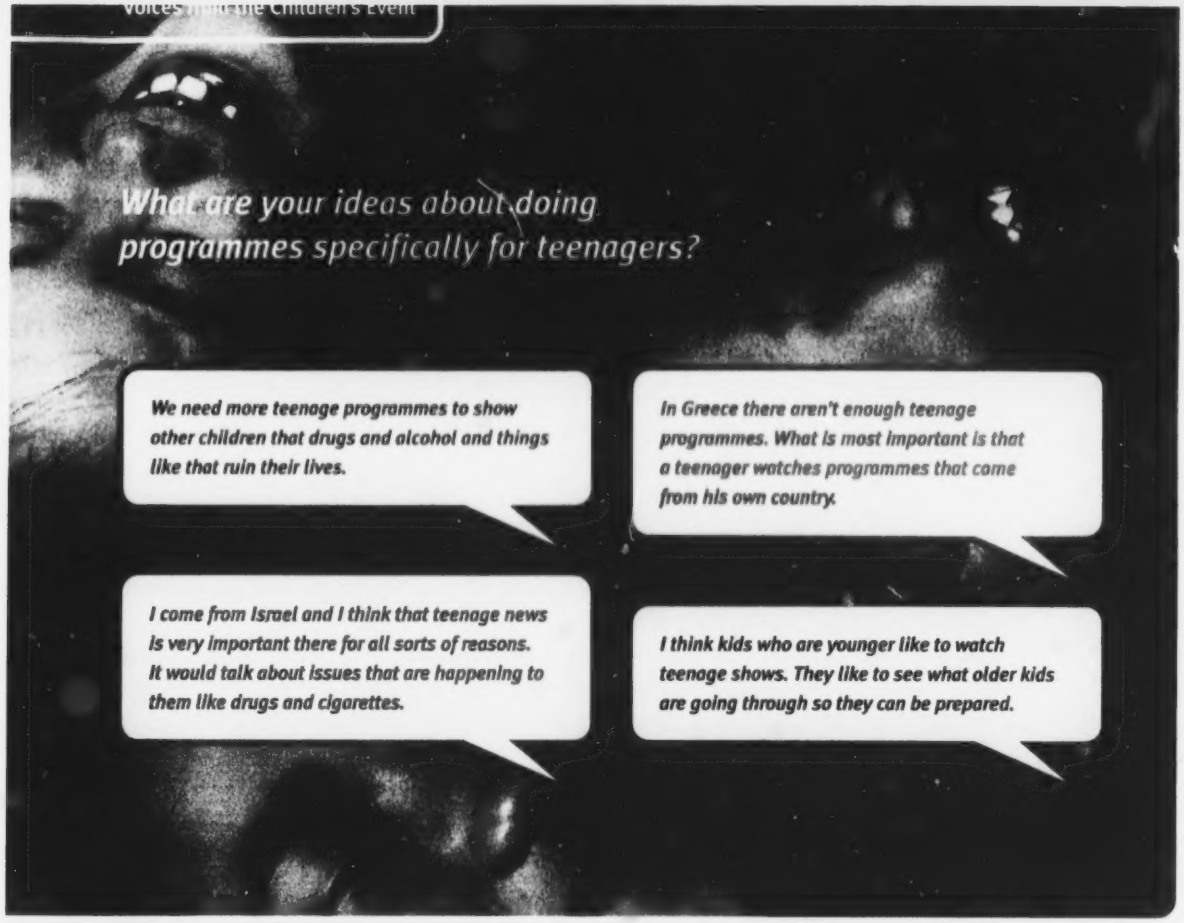
Finally, on a different scale, **Yu Peixia**, Director of Children's and Youth Programming at China Central Television (CCTV), talked of his potential audience of 50 million teenagers between 15 and 17 years old for which they were providing drama, quizzes and game shows, and some debates.

> ***What do teenagers actually want? That is one of the greatest imponderables.***
>
> **Michael Forte** agent provocateur

Scheduling of teen programmes appeared to be one of the main issues in many countries. In Jamaica such programmes are not transmitted in primetime and are thus on lower budgets. In Belgium the brand new children's channel KetNet currently closes down at 8pm, the time when most 14-year-olds actually start to watch. Others felt that between 5pm and 8pm was the best time for teenagers returning from school.

**Carole Rosen**, Vice-President of Family Programming at Home Box Office (HBO) in the USA, thought there was a distinction to be made between programmes for 14- and 15-year-olds such as *Saved by the Bell* and *Real World* and those for 16 and above.

Getchell suggested that there were three main types of programming being made – comedies such as *Saved by the Bell* in the USA, factual programmes designed to connect to the teenage world, and dramas that deal with serious issues such as sex or drugs. Levy-Sarnoff felt that those between 11 and 15 basically watch the same kind of shows. Called 'chick shows' because of their core audience of girls, these feature good-looking guys and girls and their relationships. Meanwhile, boys prefer to watch subversive comedies such as *Beavis and Butthead*. Clearly, as she said, 'teen programming can't be all things to all teens.'


What are your ideas about doing programmes specifically for teenagers?
We need more teenage programmes to show other children that drugs and alcohol and things like that ruin their lives.
In Greece there aren't enough teenage programmes. What is most important is that a teenager watches programmes that come from his own country.
I come from Israel and I think that teenage news is very important there for all sorts of reasons. It would talk about issues that are happening to them like drugs and cigarettes.
I think kids who are younger like to watch teenage shows. They like to see what older kids are going through so they can be prepared.

Purnell's experience at the BBC with older teenagers was that programmes were geared to the highest end of the age group. Here, the priority was to introduce important issues by 'sugaring the pill', as exemplifed by a popular episode of the *Rough Guide to the World* in which the presenter, clad in high heels and red lipstick wandered through a Zimbabwean soapstone art gallery. In this case, another contributor felt the programme had been successful in touching on one of the many sub-cultures operating amongst teenagers, something of which broadcasters should be aware.

More controversially, **Dr Geoff Lealand**, Senior Lecturer in Film and TV Studies at the University of Waikato in New Zealand, took the position of 'Why bother?' To him, if teens were more interested in watching only short sequences of programmes and videos, why use already scarce resources which could be better exploited on younger children and pre-schoolers in particular? In sharp disagreement, **Ruth Wiseman**, a children's producer from HTV in Bristol in the UK, felt it was still important for teenagers to have a voice. According to **Alison Forbes**, General Manager of Super Supreme Television in Jamaica, 'Unfortunately, the majority of teens in my country don't ever hear their own voices because they're busy watching American television.' Meanwhile, **Susanne Müller**, Head of Children's Programming at ZDF in Germany, believed that public television had a role to play in answering teenagers' questions about difficult issues, however small the audience.

This point about television as a key source of information was also taken up by **Dr Dale Kunkel**, Associate Professor of Communications at the University of California in Santa Barbara. His concern was that although factual programming tackled issues of risk and responsibility such as AIDS and sex, popular fiction was not addressing any of the practicalities such as the use of condoms. According to **Lisa Opie** of Trouble in the UK this was because of regulatory constraints on programmes scheduled before the watershed.

Instead of 'too much, too young', Levy-Sarnoff felt it was a case of 'too little, too late' when it came to information for teenagers. **Andrea Barrow**, teenage host of *In the Mix*, shown on PBS in America for the last five years, agreed, and suggested that music videos could be a useful way of reflecting teenage issues in a language to which they relate. According to **Sue Castle**, Executive Producer of *In the Mix*, it was a case of identifying what teens wanted and showing personal experiences from real people, though American psychiatrist **Dr Alvin Poussaint**, Director of the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston, felt it was important not to give a negative portrayal of teenage problems. **Dr Renee Cherow-O'Leary**, former research director at the Children's Television Workshop in the USA, summed up the chair's three categories of programming as 'escape, information and complexity', all of which teenagers wanted: 'Patronise them and forget about it. Their lives are so much richer than I hear most of us talking about in this room,' she concluded.





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# by kids for kids

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Mick Robertson Carlton Television, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Loes Wormmeester Bos Bros, The Netherlands |
| | Jerzy Moszkowicz International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ), Poland |
| | Suzanne French YTV, Canada |
| | Stephen Whittle Broadcasting Standards Commission, UK |
| **PRODUCERS** | Peter Murphy and Conor McAnally Zenith North, UK |
| | Jan Leventhall Carlton Television, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | Zenith North |
| **KIDS** | Central Junior Television Workshop UK |

It began like any other session – chair, panel of four, politely taking turns. So what happened to make it one of the most talked-about events of the week?

In his role as chair, **Mick Robertson**, Executive Producer of Carlton Television's *Wise Up* for Channel 4 in the UK, asked the opening question. Did it matter that children's television was one area of production in which the adults who make the programmes are inevitably not a natural part of the audience? He then showed a selection of clips in which young people were taking part in programming.

First to answer was **Loes Wormmeester**, Head of Programme Development for the Dutch independent production company Bos Bros, best known internationally for its drama programmes for children. Referring back to one of the clips, she described the origins of *In the Cupboard*, created 15 years ago and still occasionally used as a format. Having tried all sorts of approaches in order to include children's views and abandoned them as too artificial, she and her colleagues had built upon the notion of children having their say and doing what they wanted while in a cupboard. Several years on, she has adopted the same principle in aiming to show children as they really are, whether in a drama, documentary or magazine programme. Children should not be asked to express their ignorance but their expertise, she said. They should not be used as props or to parrot politically correct lines. Programme-makers would not expect adults to display their naivety by launching them into an unknown situation, so why should children be used in this way? Similarly, the artificiality of 'five kid' drama should be avoided – the stereotypical mix of characters supposed to represent the different facets of children – in favour of focusing on an individual child.

**Jerzy Moszkowicz**, President of the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ) in Poland, and a member of the executive committee of the European Network of Arts Organisations for Children, had identified three main principles in his work with children.

Panel speakers opening the session

First was the idea that through involvement in video projects, children could learn invaluable communication skills both through the task itself and through working as part of a team. Secondly, he felt the process of learning about all stages of programme-making was fundamental to children's understanding of the power of television: 'Simply speaking, the child who understands the trick will not be taken in by it.' And thirdly, he wanted to stress that television should never be an end in itself but should communicate a message to an identifiable audience.

All three principles were fundamental to a project called Video Exchange: Kids for Kids being developed at the European Children's Television Centre, explained Moszkowicz. This aims to use television as a tool to expand communication between young people in Europe and elsewhere by working with talented young video-makers and giving them the opportunity to learn from leading professionals in the field.

> ***Many of the delegates found this confrontational style highly uncomfortable, although some excellent points came out of it. This was child agitprop at its best. I loved it, but then I wasn't there. I suspect that if I had been there, I would have hated it too.***
>
> **Michael Forte** agent provocateur

Kids with their spokesman Jason Bradbury

At this point, there was an abrupt change of mood as the lights went out, aggressive music came over the loudspeakers and groups of young people rushed into the room shining high-powered torches to take over the proceedings. Picking and choosing likely supporters among the audience, they selected British television presenter **Jason Bradbury** as their spokesman. On their behalf, he began to demand more honesty from the audience about the extent to which children were actually being involved in programme-making. A few producers rose to the occasion and spoke proudly, if not defensively, about their efforts. Discussion veered from the restrictions on young people handling production equipment to other ways in which they could make their voices heard, such as through the Internet. Now they had the attention of an influential audience, suggested one producer, 'If you could make shows, what sort of shows would you want to make?'

One of the two remaining panellists, **Suzanne French**, Manager of Co-production at YTV in Canada, expressed her willingness to make programmes involving children if it was thought that they would work with the audience. However, she made the point that when they had involved children in the production of news or magazine shows, the young audience had opted for the professional quality of mainstream shows such as *Rugrats* instead – something a commercial broadcaster could not afford to ignore.

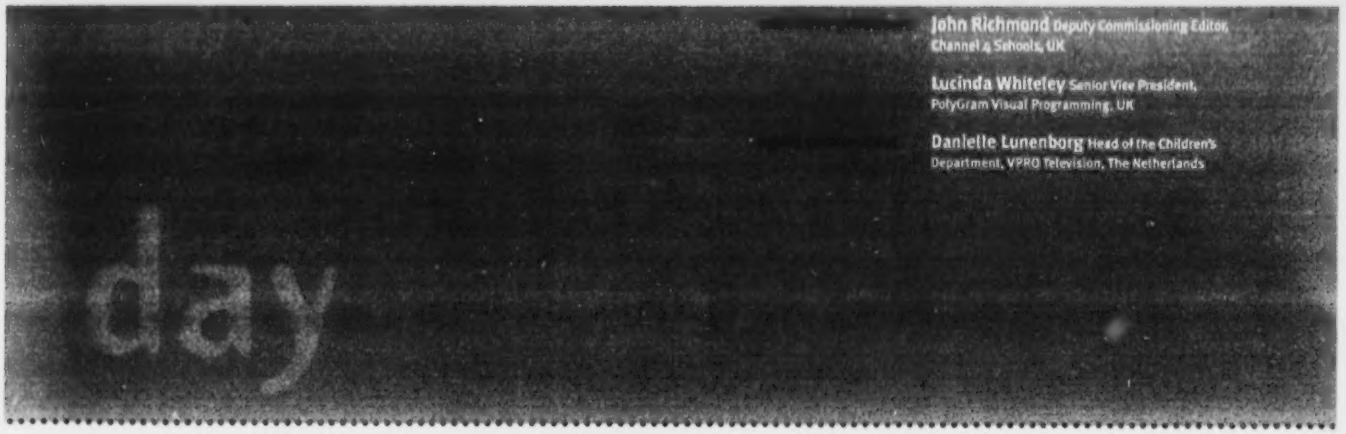
Meanwhile, **Stephen Whittle**, Director of the Broadcasting Standards Commission in the UK, questioned two aspects. Would there be a clash between the programming priorities of children and their parents? And should children be subject to the same rules of fairness as adult programme-makers when it came to issues such as privacy? His own feeling was that the child audience was itself very diverse in its needs and, in many cases, showed a preference for adult programmes anyway. As one contributor suggested, part of the reason for this was the inappropriate scheduling of much children's programming.

Ideas about how to involve children ranged from giving them more hands-on production experience and editorial control to the use of children's panels in order to create a two-way flow with broadcasters. Above all, it was crucial to understand what young people wanted from television.

Before thanking everyone for coping with the 'invasion' in the spirit in which it was meant, Bradbury wound up the session with five key demands from children:

1. All broadcasters should involve children in making their programmes.
2. Producers should let children have an input throughout.
3. Children should be taught how to use technical equipment.
4. Children should be able to watch what they want to watch at whatever time they want to watch it.
5. Money should be made available for more research into what children want.

> ***'It is very unusual, almost unique, to have such a large international gathering that is not primarily about commerce. The main themes are quality, range and diversity, and the task that most of us face of swimming against the tidal wave of fast-food television that threatens to engulf children's schedules everywhere and to obliterate the precious differences between us. Today I think we made an excellent start.'***
>
> **Michael Forte** agent provocateur


day
John Richmond Deputy Commissioning Editor, Channel 4 Schools, UK
Lucinda Whiteley Senior Vice President, PolyGram Visual Programming, UK
Danielle Lunenborg Head of the Children's Department, VPRO Television, The Netherlands

# 2 politics

children's television legislation in the united states and the role of the v-chip

**the political context for children's television**

no news is bad news

**schools television and the politics of the environment**

what's the use of research?

**where do you draw the line? the boundaries of children's television**

viva vernacular! does anyone here speak english?

**media education: snapshots from three countries**

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# children's television legislation in the united states and the role of the v-chip

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAIR | John Richmond Channel 4, UK |
| SPEAKER | The Hon Edward J Markey United States Representative Member, House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Telecommunications, Trade and Consumer Protection |
| SPONSOR | Fox Kids |

As Executive Producer for the second day of the summit, **John Richmond**, Deputy Commissioning Editor for Channel 4 Schools in the UK, opened proceedings by explaining that the overall topic was politics – the relationship between television for children and the political contexts within which television is produced, broadcast, traded and regulated. He was using the phrase 'political contexts' in several senses: first, the actual business of law-making; second, a recognition that the countries represented at the conference embrace an enormous variety of systems of government which have differing impacts, direct and indirect, on the television they make; and third, the cultural expectations of what is or is not acceptable in form and in content in television for children across the world.

Initially, the focus would be on the legislative framework for children's television in the USA, often wrongly assumed to be simply a free-market paradise for networks and producers. To outline the true situation, he introduced the day's keynote speaker, **The Hon Edward J Markey**, US Representative Member, House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Telecommunications, Trade and Consumer Protection, who has sat in the US Congress for the Seventh District of Massachusetts for 22 years and is the author of both the 1990 Children's Television Act and the 1996 V-chip legislation.

### The Hon Edward J Markey

'Thank you for the opportunity to be able to discuss the impact of media on children. It is a subject that has held my attention since I was a boy and had an encounter with Big Brother Bob Emery, the host of a television programme that ran in Boston during the time that I was a grammar-school boy in the 1950s. He was on every single day at noon and in that era, as you know, Mom was at home ready with the peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a bowl of tomato bisque.

There came a time when it was my Cub Scouts Troop's turn to go into this television studio in Boston and be the 'peanut gallery' for Big Brother Bob Emery. At a critical time in the show, he would say to all the kids watching television in Boston: "It's now time for us to salute to the President of the United States" – at that time Dwight David Eisenhower. He would tell each of us that it was important for us to turn to Mom and have her put together a milk with Bosco – a very thick chocolate syrup that had to be purchased in the department store as a supplement to your milk.

Well, I was sitting there and, much to my shock, Big Brother put down the glass of full milk and picked up an empty glass. When they'd finished playing 'Hail to the Chief', he put down the empty glass and said "Wasn't that great kids? Make sure you tell Mom to buy Bosco for tomorrow's salute to the President."

> *'The free market just doesn't work for a children's marketplace. From the perspective of many programme producers and of many advertisers, it's just another audience to be exploited.'*

Now, obviously, in retrospect, a 70-year-old guy was not glugging a glass of milk with Bosco in it every day for 20 years but we, as part of the children's audience, clearly were being influenced by very deceptive advertising to influence, if not terrorise, Mom to buy this particular brand of chocolate drink. There were no rules, you could do whatever you wanted to the children's audience.

There then occurred in Boston in the 1970s a very specific incident when one of the American television networks ran a made-for-television movie in which three young street toughs poured gasoline on a street vagrant, an older person, and burned him alive. The next day in Boston three young kids poured gasoline on a homeless person and burned him alive.

A huge debate broke out across America. What was the responsibility of television with regard to programming that could perhaps incite young people to act out what they had seen? The broadcasters all said they had no responsibility. The local broadcasters said they only took the programming that came from the network.



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I went on television to debate these issues, arguing that the local broadcasters had the responsibility to reject the quantity and quality of violent programming that was coming from the network. They all told me that they really didn't have the authority to do so. This really created a dilemma. If the television set was no more than a receptacle for free-market programming designed and programmed in Hollywood or Los Angeles for children all across America with parents just sitting there unwilling and powerless with all this information going into their living room, good or bad, then we had a real problem.

The free market just doesn't work for a children's marketplace. From the perspective of many programme producers and of many advertisers, it's just another audience to be exploited. So, in my 22 years in Congress, I have tried my best to construct a programme that I think works for this modern era. I call it a Five 4 Kids Programme, and it includes the following five key initiatives:

1. Provide our schools and libraries with learning links for the digital age.
2. Secure the privacy of kids on-line.
3. Empower parents to block excessive violence or sexual material on television.
4. Save public television.
5. Broadcast more educational television.

Now because of extraordinary advocates like Peggy Charren and Kathryn Montgomery, both of whom are here today, we've made a great deal of progress on every one of these items. I also think it's an agenda which activists and policy-makers in other nations will find useful. Let me review with you each of the items very briefly.

First, learning links. We have enacted into federal law a requirement that every school and library in our country receive telecommunication services at a discounted rate. It also funds the wiring of each school in the country, thus helping to reduce the differences that exist between the information 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

The second issue is privacy. As we strive to increase the cyber literacy of children, we have an obligation to address some of the potential negative effects of electronic communication. Digital commerce will avail marketers of the opportunity to track the click stream of any citizen of the Net, to sneak corporate hands into a personal information 'cookie jar' and to use this

The Hon Edward J Markey

database to compile sophisticated consumer profiles. Hijacking personal information is particularly troubling when kids are the target.

I recommend to you in this regard the work of the Center for Media Education, a small research organisation in Washington DC, which has detailed the myriad scams now run on the Internet in a report entitled *Web of Deceit*. We have yet to fully develop the world of telecomputers, where a child watching a cartoon will be given the option of clicking on an icon in the corner of the TV in order to go strolling in a virtual toy store. But to begin drawing some reasonable lines against the explosion of new electronically based marketing opportunities, I have proposed a Cyber Privacy Bill of Rights that anybody should be able to rely on when engaging in electronic transaction. It has three parts and it should become a law in the United States and around the globe.

1. Every user must have the right to know that information is being gleaned about how they're using the Web.
2. Every consumer, every child, every adult, must have the right to adequate and conspicuous notice if any of the personal information collected is intended for re-use or re-sale to third parties.
3. Every user must have the right to say 'No' legally, with penalties against any company and any individual who has gleaned this information and is now using it in a way that the consumer finds to be unacceptable.

The third issue is the V-chip. It is now a law in the USA that every television set of 13 inches or larger, manufactured and sold, must have a V-chip built into it. We sell 25 million television sets per year, so within two years there will be 50 million with a V-chip. The issue is quite simple. It's enabling parents to block out programming that they find unsuitable for their children.

When I introduced this piece of legislation in 1993, it became the subject of four years of intense political debate. Over time, people have realised that if you're going to expand to an era of 100 cable channels it's also possible dramatically to improve the on/off button technologically so that parents can deal with the reality that in many homes Mom is not home, she is working. We have eight million latch-key kids. We have 18 million single parents. The world globally is not much different. The technology gives parents an ability to be able to decide for themselves, using a rating system that classifies the programming, to pre-programme the TV set with your ATM number, a number you'd use to take money out of a machine. And, by the way, if your eight-year-old knows your ATM number, you have bigger problems than violence on television.

> *'It's possible to improve the on/off button technologically so that parents can deal with the reality that in many homes Mom is not at home, she is working.'*

Finally, let's turn to the programming that helps kids. A lot of people say we really don't have to do anything because the cable universe takes care of it. There's no question that Nickelodeon and a lot of the other high-quality programming – the Disney Channel, the Discovery Channel – are great for kids. It's the best that we've ever had. The problem is that you have to pay for it, and that means that there are millions of homes in the United States and around the planet that cannot afford it. If that's the case then we have to do something to ensure that they have access to this kind of programming.

PBS in the USA is really the children's broadcasting system. From 6.30am until 6pm every night there is a steady stream of high-quality children's programming. When the Republican Party took over in January 1995, many people wanted to privatise the public broadcasting system. Well, just for your information, it costs one dollar per person per year in the USA to fund the entire public broadcasting system. To destroy something that puts on *Sesame Street* et cetera all day long, that 80 per cent of all parents use for their small children, would seem to me to be a terrible mistake. That's what the American people told the Republican Party throughout 1995 and early 1996. Slowly but surely, it has backed away and PBS is once again sacrosanct.

But that doesn't leave out the question of whether or not the commercial broadcasters should put high-quality educational children's programming on the air every week. In the early 1980s the FCC repealed all laws with regard to children's television. It opened up a tremendous opportunity for Nickelodeon, Disney, Discovery and others and they filled it, but it didn't at the same time discharge the responsibilities which the broadcaster have. So Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television, and a whole bunch of other people, began a campaign that culminated in 1990 with the passage of the Children's Television Act of which I had the honour of being the sponsor. That law said that, as a licence requirement, every television station had to demonstrate that it had produced educational and informational programming specifically designed for the children within the viewing area of that local television station. It took us five years to get the FCC to actually promulgate the rules that would specifically outline what those responsibilities were – three hours per week for every television station in America.

Some people say that the programming thus far is not that good. It only started last September so we're only five months into this experiment. We have to put pressure upon the broadcasters to advertise, to market these programmes successfully. You can't just say "We'll discharge the minimum responsibility we have," and not make it clear to families that this programming is on.

So that's the agenda, those five points – each one of them aimed at ensuring that we do everything possible to give children access to the skills they're going to need in order to compete for jobs in the 21st century.'

*This is an edited version of The Hon Edward J Markey's speech.*

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# the political context for children's television

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Peggy Charren Harvard University, USA |
| **SPEAKERS** | Dolly Wolbrum Israel Educational Television |
| | Professor Bhaskara Rao Centre for Media Studies, India |
| | Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri Premier, Free State Province, South Africa |
| | Trond Waage Children's Ombudsman, Norway |
| | Carol Tongue Member of the European Parliament, UK |
| **MEDIATORS** | Farrell Corcoran RTE, Ireland |
| | Dr Patricia Edgar Australian Children's Television Foundation |
| **PRODUCER** | Ben Robinson Mentorn Barraclough Carey, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | UNICEF |

Peggy Charren

In the words of **Peggy Charren**, Visiting Scholar in Education at Harvard University and chair of this session, following on from the day's keynote address, Senator Edward J Markey was a 'mighty super-hero among child advocates' in the USA. Before focusing the audience on her panel's main objective – the ways in which the policies and legislative agenda of different governments affect the programming available to the child audience around the world – she mentioned her own early experience as an activist in the early 1970s. As founder of Action for Children's Television, she opposed the tactics of censorship, preferring to encourage diversity: 'We pointed out that families can turn off terrible television but they cannot turn on terrific television if it's not available.' The single sheet of paper outlining their proposals for more children's programming and separation of editorial from commercial content which they presented to the Federal Communications Commission led eventually to the Children's Television Act of 1990.

The self-styled 'grandma of the Children's Television Act' – 'I would have been the mother but it took too long' – then introduced her first panellist, **Dolly Wolbrum**, Executive Producer from Israel Educational Television, who talked briefly about an Israeli-Palestinian co-production, *Rechov Sumsum, Shara'a Simsim*. Designed to teach tolerance and mutual respect between Israelis and Palestinians, this project has a budget of $4million – half from the Israeli government and half from the American-based Children's Television Workshop – for 65 half-hour shows. Wolbrum sees the opportunity to produce such a series as the main advantage of being part of a government-run channel. The downside is that they have to operate under a complicated bureaucracy with its associated political pressures.

The second speaker, **Professor Bhaskara Rao**, Chair of the Centre for Media Studies in New Delhi, tried to explain the vastness of the task facing those concerned about the impact of television on a country the size and scale of India. His fear was that 'commercial compulsions' were really setting the pace, together with liberalising policies on the part of government. To Rao, the political context was not sufficient on its own to combat the dictates of the market. Locally produced children's television was actually in decline in terms of hours, with an increasing amount coming from abroad. His own lobbying efforts a decade before, in the National Council of Television Viewers, had failed, as had recent attempts at broadcasting legislation by the outgoing government. However, the main contender in the imminent elections, the BJP Party, had made history by including mention of the effects of television on children in its manifesto.

Wanting to focus on the more positive aspect of using television to enable children, however, Rao advocated a tripartite approach in countries such as India, involving academics and policy-makers, parents and teachers and, thirdly, civil society and the corporate world. In reply to a question from the floor, he also mentioned the work of the National Centre of Films for Children and Young People which, despite a small budget, was making some important programmes for children.

The next speaker, **Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri**, Premier of the Free State Province of South Africa and former Chair of the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation, spoke of different dilemmas in a country that has undergone such recent political change. Here, the public broadcaster is funded wholly by advertising rather than by government or a licence fee, with more attention focused on the different target audiences of the three channels than on their individual content. Against this background, children's television had only become more of an issue since the First World Summit. Even then, broadcasters faced the challenge of catering for very different audiences: white, black, and with varying cultural needs and experiences. More positively, she saw programming for children as 'the greatest opportunity because they look alike, they have common experiences and so on', although the power of advertisers to target those with most disposable income – a white audience of a certain class – at the expense of others should not be underestimated.

Contributing from the floor, **Nadia Bulbulia** from the Independent Broadcasting Authority in South Africa expressed sympathy with Professor Rao's notion that policy alone was not enough: 'The problem we certainly have locally is how to challenge broadcasters to actually start developing their internal policies in the interests of programming for children.' Encouraged by the idea of co-production for children between neighbouring states in conflict such as Israel and Palestine, **Moneeza Hashmi**, Executive Producer for the Pakistan TV Corporation, commented 'I feel that it's the children of the world who will bring us adults to our senses.'

Taking up Charren's critical comments about censorship legislation, **Lesley Osborne**, Standards Manager from the Australian Broadcasting Authority, suggested that what some might see as an interventionist regulatory framework requiring self-classification and quality criteria for children actually worked well and had community support in Australia. In response, Charren explained that she was more concerned about blanket censorship or classification on the part of governments which took no account of individual preferences.

Before moving on to another panel speaker, Charren also replied to a suggestion by **Rod Gromero** from the South East Asian Foundation for Children's Television and GMA Network in the Philippines. With broadcasters in the Philippines now mandated to devote 15 per cent of primetime to programming for children through a Children's Television Act passed in 1997, he asked whether advertisers might eventually have to commit their financial support in a similar way. Concerned that attempts to allocate such money were fraught with problems in a commercial system, Charren nevertheless agreed that endowment to provide seed funding could work and indeed had done so in the past in the USA.

**Trond Waage**, Ombudsman for Children in Norway, who has previously worked for UNICEF and Childwatch International, explained that children make up a quarter of the population in his country. He felt that the multi-billion dollar media industry was setting the world agenda rather than the policitians who, in the face of media power and technological advances, appeared to be impotent. To him, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by every state except Somalia and the USA, created 'an enormous national and international platform for action' which could act as a powerful tool as long as people were sufficiently aware of its existence. The Norwegian government had been asked to set up an international workshop on children and the media related to the articles in the Convention which was due to take place in 1999. He also referred to the forthcoming on-line Junior Summit organised by UNICEF in which 1,000 children from around the world would be equipped with computers in order to participate in a six-month forum for the global exchange of ideas. Finally, he perceived a growing movement among parents reacting against the pressure exerted by the media – a Screenpeace to equal the strength of Greenpeace 20 years ago.

> *'If the television diet is a visual equivalent of hamburgers, how on earth can children possibly develop a taste for avocado, sauerkraut or cassoulet?'*

The final panel speaker was **Carol Tongue**, Labour MEP for London East since 1984, and Co-ordinator on Culture, Media and Sport for the party of the European Socialist, who has recently published a report on the future of public service television in a multi-channel environment. Endorsing Vaage's recognition of the UN Convention, she also pointed to Article 128 of the Treaty of the European Union which calls for cultural and linguistic diversity, something she declared to be missing within European broadcasting with its trend, particularly in the UK, towards an Anglo-American Australian culture. 'How can children be citizens of Europe if they have no knowledge of their own continent?' she asked. 'If the TV diet is a visual equivalent of hamburgers, how on earth can they possibly develop a taste for avocado, sauerkraut or cassoulet?' With recent research showing a significant rise in animation, particularly on cable and satellite channels, she felt that such channels should be obliged to





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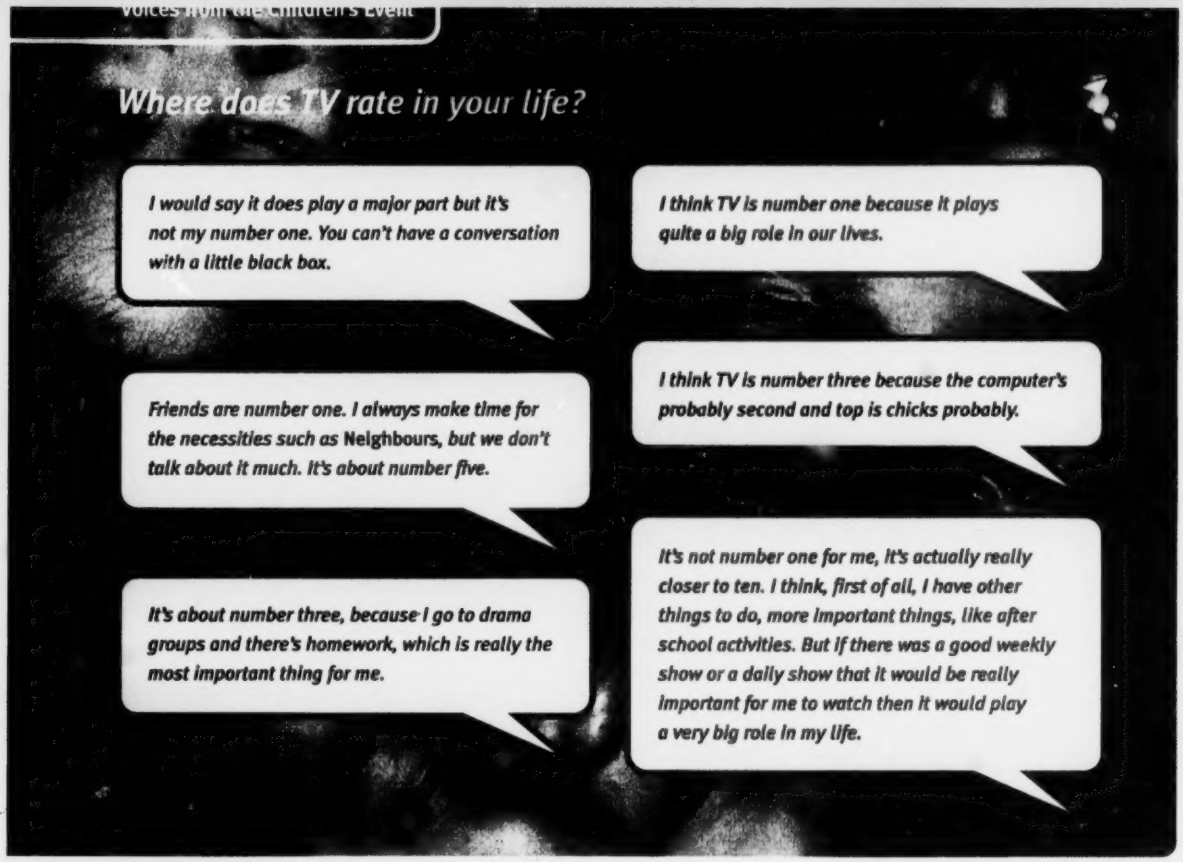
Where does TV rate in your life?
I would say it does play a major part but it's not my number one. You can't have a conversation with a little black box.
I think TV is number one because it plays quite a big role in our lives.
Friends are number one. I always make time for the necessities such as Neighbours, but we don't talk about it much. It's about number five.
I think TV is number three because the computer's probably second and top is chicks probably.
It's about number three, because I go to drama groups and there's homework, which is really the most important thing for me.
It's not number one for me, it's actually really closer to ten. I think, first of all, I have other things to do, more important things, like after school activities. But if there was a good weekly show or a daily show that it would be really important for me to watch then it would play a very big role in my life.

observe the European *Television without Frontiers* Directive with its requirement for 51 per cent of fiction, drama, documentary and film to be British or European in the same way as terrestrial channels. She concluded with mention of a study being carried out by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) into the feasibility of a pan-European public service channel with a strand for children.

Finally, Charren turned to the first of two mediators asked to identify strategies emerging from this session, **Farrell Corcoran**, Chairman of RTE in Ireland. Like many broadcasters facing the impact of the global culture at a local level, he stated his own commitment to the diversity at the heart of public service broadcasting, not only in terms of audiences but also of genres, and his alarm at its erosion. This was evident in the decrease in home production and in factual material in the face of a flood of imported animation – as he said, 'the ideal product for a global market'. Explaining that cultural, rather than economic, logic had led Ireland to restrict advertisers' access to young children, much to the annoyance of bodies such as the Toy Manufacturers' Association, Corcoran fully realised that funding and politics were fundamental to such debates. Now that the political arena had shifted away from the national to the European stage, he hoped that intervention at this level would protect public service broadcasting and such organisations as the EBU which were invaluable to small broadcasters with scarce resources. He felt that broadcasters such as RTE were open to lobbying but was surprised at the lack of organised groups either coming forward to put their case or recognising the budgetary realities.

**Dr Patricia Edgar**, Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation and host of the First World Summit, began by agreeing that lobbying was not for the faint-hearted: 'You need to be strong-minded, passionate, relentless and an absolute believer in the cause.' The aim is to persuade politicians that public pressure is more important than displeasing media proprietors such as Rupert Murdoch. Whereas the UK is only now seeing the encroachment of globalisation, Australia had had to create what is now a burgeoning children's television industry from a position where virtually no Australian programming was being made 20 years ago. Realising that this had to be sustained and developed globally, she had established the First World Summit. However, she felt that it was imperative to have a continuing structure in order to keep the issues alive between events and to enter into dialogue with the USA over free trade and regulation.

To Edgar's final point that, for successful lobbying, 'absolutely nothing can take the place of persistence', Charren added that a good relationship with the press was also a vital ingredient. **Lewis Rudd**, Senior Executive Producer of Children's Programmes at Carlton Television in the UK, paid tribute to both Charren and Edgar in recalling that British Action for Children's Television had learnt much from them in its campaign to achieve a mandated ten hours weekly of children's television on ITV from a free-market government. In conclusion, Charren emphasised the 'incredible need for indigenous programming' in preference to 'getting somebody's dumb animated cartoons made in another country that don't teach you anything about that country.'



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# no news is bad news

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| **CHAIR** | Jon Snow ITN, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Maja Anzulovic RTVBH, Bosnia<br>Pascal Petit Canal j, France<br>James Kabwe DTV, Tanzania<br>Akira Ikegami NHK, Japan |
| **PRODUCERS** | Madeline Wiltshire and Louise Lynch Mentorn Barraclough Carey North, UK |

'News is boring,' according to some children. This was the opening challenge thrown down by the chair **Jon Snow**, news presenter for the UK's *Channel 4 News* and also for the weekly Channel 4 Schools news programme *First Edition*, who then showed 15 examples of news programming from around the world, ranging from long-established weekly shows fronted by adults to bulletins presented by children. He also introduced a group of junior delegates from Japan, Bosnia, the USA, Australia, England and Scotland who had been invited to participate in the session.

Chair Jon Snow with speakers and junior delegates

> *'We should sometimes give children bad news, but honest news, complete and specially prepared for their age.'*

The first speaker, **Maja Anzulovic**, Head of the Children's and Youth Department at Bosnia Herzegovenia Television, the only national public broadcaster based in Sarajevo, gave, in her own words, a 'very personal television experience'. This was the story of how, since 1991 and the first signals of war, the broadcaster had developed a magazine programme for children dealing with their everyday problems and experiences. When war actually broke out, the big question was to what extent the broadcaster should protect children from reality: 'If we give them information and explain things to them it is sure that they are going to be less afraid. We should not keep them away from reality, overprotect them, underestimate their ability to understand and right to be informed. We should treat them equally and sometimes give them even bad news, but honest news, complete and specially prepared for their age.'

The truth was that they couldn't be protected anyway in a city under seige, during which time 1,700 children were killed, recalled Anzulovic. Risking their own lives to reach the editing room, she and her colleagues produced two documentaries each week, the main aims of which were to 'keep children in the shelters, to keep their spirits high and to show that life still goes on.' After all, 'does it mean that bad news is only *about* children and not *for* children?' The programmes also served a practical purpose in keeping children in touch with each other across a divided city and in allowing them to express themselves through their own programmes – 'the start of the intellectual resistance of the people against violence and aggression.'

One of the junior delegates, **Ivona Zurovac**, who had lived through this time in Sarajevo, felt that she hadn't liked all that had been shown on television but that 'it's reality and has to be seen'. Sometimes, too, television had provided a welcome escape. **Fraser Anderson** from Scotland also made the point that children had just as much right as adults to see what was going on, although **Sally Osborne** from Australia preferred the idea of news directed at her own age group.

From the floor, **Susanne Müller**, Head of Children's Programmes at ZDF in Germany, had been impressed by the 'decent' pictures in the Bosnia news programme for children: 'Adult news of today could learn from the decency that children's news tries to take in showing what happens if the bomb falls and what is the effect. You don't need the explosion but it really is sufficient if you see what it does...' Jon Snow agreed and regretted the endless pursuit of corpses rather than just hearing what people have to say.

The next panellist, **Pascal Petit**, Chief Editor of *Le JTJ* on Canal j in France, spoke from the perspective of a live daily news programme for children. He outlined the thinking behind the ten-minute children's news slot which has been going out just



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before the main adult news at 7.50pm each weekday since September 1997. Targeted at children between eight and 12 – the age, according to Petit, at which they are most interested in news – this is the only children's news programme on any of the French networks. The programme focuses on two or three main items each day, using similar pictures to those used for the adult news but with explanations tailor-made for children. To Petit, the words are all-important: 'Our role is not only to explain what is going on in the world, but also to open their eyes, develop their critical sense and talk about the world as it is.'

In addition, the programme covers topics of particular interest to children – pocket money, violence at school and hobbies. It also makes extensive use of computer graphics, both to simplify explanations but also to give a distinctive character to the programme. Humour plays an important part, as does the modish dress of the presenters. Viewers also have a chance to make their feelings known and there is a regular art competition for pictures depicting news events, the best of which are shown on screen.

In contrast, **James Kabwe**, Producer of Children's Programmes from Dar es Salaam Television (DTV) in Tanzania, talked about involving children in the production of a weekly news slot for a children's show. *Club Kiddoz*, transmitted daily from 4.30pm to 5.30pm on DTV, one of the three privately owned television stations on the Tanzanian mainland, is designed to entertain, inform and educate and gives children a chance to learn more about the lives and cultures of their counterparts from different parts of the world. For the weekly 15-minute news slot, six students aged between ten and 16 are given the freedom to go out and look for what they think could make good news stories for children. They have help with scripting and production and one of the students presents the programme which goes out in Swahili and English. Kwbabe spoke about stories which had successfully raised funds for a school, another which had led to a government investigation into child labour in Zanzibar, and coverage of a polio vaccination campaign resulting in a 25 per cent increase in turn-out. Their aim was to extend the news slot to 20 minutes.

**Akira Ikegami**, Senior Reporter in the News Department at NHK in Japan, outlined a rather different approach to news programming involving drama and role play. Started four years ago, *Weekly News for Kids* goes out nationwide for 27 minutes at 8.30am on a Sunday morning on a general channel to around eight million viewers. The five presenters – three children and two adults – play the roles of a family who investigate the news. As Chief Editor, Ikegami, a reporter for 25 years, also acts as father to the family in the show, which is live. Co-produced by the news department and children's producers, it is basically aimed at children between 11 and 14. With similar news topics to those of the adult news but with a mission to explain subjects in a way that an 11-year-old would understand, he is surprised at the number of adult viewers.

Divided into three parts, the programme firstly reports the week's main news in brief. It then explains the most complicated news of the week by using conceptual models and, finally, focuses on recent big issues through the use of computer graphics. Although a script may be prepared in order to explain a complicated story such as the unification of the European Union or anti-'greenhouse effect' policies, this is often changed once it has been shown to three child presenters, acting as *de facto* senior producers, on the Saturday evening.

> *'Adults cannot single-handedly assume that some issue is too difficult for children to understand and leave them in the dark.'*

Apart from the complexity of many issues, Ikegami felt the second main difficulty with reporting news to children was in dealing with the details of scandals, sexual or otherwise. The decision to cover the President Clinton story, for instance, was governed by the fact that this could turn into something much larger if the President were to be forced to resign. 'It's not about an affair with a woman, but an affair of telling a lie. I often feel that I can do nothing except show the children the dishonourable aspects of our adult society. It's very dangerous to give children the impression that all politicians are corrupt.'

Ikegami continued: 'There are great difficulties involved in giving children the same news as adults, but I believe it is absolutely necessary to produce a news programme for children. Adults cannot single-handedly assume that some issue is too difficult for children to understand and leave them in the dark. It's wrong to give children only a partial description when they are trying to the best of their abilities to comprehend.'

Whatever the format, therefore, there was general agreement that children's news programmes should tackle difficult issues, both domestic and foreign. Children themselves appreciated the efforts made to make topics more interesting for them, realising that to be global citizens meant having an understanding of all aspects of their world.



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# schools television and the politics of the environment

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|---|---|
| **PRESENTERS** | Frank Flynn BBC Schools, UK |
| | John Richmond Channel 4 Schools, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Sachiko Kodaira NHK, Japan |
| | Nicola Galombik SABC, South Africa |
| **SPONSOR** | BBC Education |

Before introducing a compilation of schools programmes from around the world dealing with environmental issues, the session's co-producer **John Richmond**, Deputy Commissioning Editor for Channel 4 Schools in the UK, spoke of the wide recognition that the environment was a political cause that excited children's passions wherever they lived. 'I think it's true in many countries,' he said, 'that generally the business of adult politics has little appeal for children. But they can see with great intensity of vision that adults are doing damage to the planet in large and small ways.' Although most young children had no idea of the political complexity involved, older children understood the power of pressure groups and the need for organised action. This was what should be informed and encouraged by broadcasters. Well aware of environmental concerns on both a global and more local scale, children needed positive practical channels into which their emotions of anger, distress or concern could be directed.

His fellow producer, **Frank Flynn**, Head of Commissioning for BBC Schools in the UK, then took over, expressing the sentiment that television tended to heighten anxieties without actually empowering children to do anything about their immediate environment. As way of remedying this, three groups of children from Johannesburg, Belfast and London had been asked to give their opinions on the subject in a short film. This explored in a very challenging way their sense of urgency about the damage being done to the environment, made some terrifying predictions for the future and identified some projects to be undertaken.

The first of two main speakers, **Sachiko Kodaira**, Senior Researcher at NHK in Japan, then outlined her company's approach to environmental education programmes. With a long history of schools broadcasting – the service began in 1953 – NHK had run its first environmental series, *The Green Earth*, targeted at 10- to 12-year-olds, over 20 years ago. More recently, the 20-part series *Only One Earth* took a broader view, encompassing lifestyles and human relationships. One of the programmes from the series, *Trash: A Hazard to Wildlife*, shown in the compilation, had won the prestigious Japan Prize in 1996.

Using incidents such as a piegon encountering a discarded fishing line and a sea turtle swallowing plastic bags, this showed 'the gravity of life lost through the negative side of convenience'. Positive viewing figures indicated that such programmes were well received and have been useful to schools in transcending normal curriculum categories.

> *'The average South African child has much less chance of ever seeing a lion in their lives than the average child in the UK.'*

Kodaira reported that there had also been an encouraging response to on-line information, provided both for this series and other schools programmes, from teachers and children. The idea was to cater for self-learning, particularly in connection with environmental programmes. In a similar vein, a recent experiment called *Multimedia Only One Earth* looked at the use of the Internet on environmental subjects, gathering responses not only from schools but also from environmental specialists and the general public to be fed into a new series, *Internet School, Only One Earth*, starting in April 1998.

In conclusion, Kodaira stressed her belief that, through positive activity such as the use of all aspects of the media, 'environmental education is one of the subjects which should be emphasised and expanded not only within school education but also in family education and, more widely, as a responsibility for society.'

The second speaker was **Nicola Galombik**, Head of Education Television for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). By contrast with NHK, her department is only a year old, having been initiated in partnership with the Department of Education after South Africa's first national democratic elections in 1997. It is trying to meet the educational needs of the country's children in a holistic way, going beyond the curriculum to the development of the whole child. With plenty of their



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own immediate environmental problems, such as water pollution and rubbish dumping, South Africans are alienated by some traditional environmental discourses. As she pointed out, 'One of the ironies is that the average South African child has much less chance of ever seeing a lion in their lives than the average child in the UK.' The challenge then was to develop programmes that are centred on people rather than just animals or forests, to make the connection to daily realities and thirdly to achieve collective action – something that comes quite easily to such communities.

Two clips, one for children between six and nine and the other for older school children, illustrated Galombik's point about a cross-curricular approach. In both cases these had been transmitted outside school hours because more children had access to television and video at home than at school.

Galombik's final plea was for an environmental education that was about 'a global village and not a global forest': 'I think that if we can make those connections between people and the real histories and the real stories that they live, then we're going to give our children an opportunity to really solve these problems.'

The debate that followed raised concerns and agreement from regions as diverse as South America, Finland, California, South Africa, Nigeria and Wales. English programme-maker **Hilary Sandison**, who has been working in South America for several years, shared some of the frustrations experienced in South Africa. Her feeling was that children in Europe and North America were not being helped to understand some of the more complicated issues: 'Children need to be shown how to relate consuming to the effects of that consumption. Most of them probably don't make a link between the fact that half the dams built in the Amazon are to produce electricity to get the aluminium out to build motor cars and not for ordinary people to have more electricity.'

The idea that the environment has far wider significance was echoed by **Dr Milton Chen**, Executive Director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation in the USA. Here, it was seen as a theme through which so many other subjects could be approached, particularly because of children's passion for the topic. Thus 'placing a garden in every school in addition to educational video and computers really brings together all their concerns.' As **Chris Morris**, a producer from BBC Wales, saw it, the problem was that broadcasters tended to be very selective in what they told children rather than facing up to the real complexities. On the other hand, children had to be presented with problems that they could actually do something about. Perhaps the real aim was to achieve a balance between the coverage of local and global issues.

Finally, Richmond asked for everyone's co-operation in considering a draft charter document focusing on schools broadcasting on the environment. Once amended with suggestions from delegates, this would be distributed to broadcasters with the idea that they should take it to their national governments and international environmental organisations in order to achieve a global consensus on the way forward.

The draft charter states that broadcasters and producers adopting its principles agree to:

1 Give prominence in their schedules for children, whether schools schedules or schedules for home viewing, to programmes promoting the care of the environment.

2 Ensure that all programmes take appropriate opportunities to promote the care of the environment, implicitly or explicitly, whatever the principal topic of the programme.

3 Recognise the international nature of many environmental problems and causes, by looking for co-production opportunities and joint supply agreements, so that the costs of providing television pictures of particular sites and events are shared.

4 Make links with national governments, multi-government bodies and with national and international environmental organisations, seeking co-funding opportunities and proposing joint multi-media campaigns.

5 Use television in collaboration with the Internet and the Worldwide Web to promote the involvement of children in interactive communications and campaigns which care for the environment.

*After consultation, the draft charter has now been supported by broadcasters around the world. It will therefore be sent to delegates in its final form by John Richmond.*

# what's the use of research?

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| **CHAIR** | Gareth Grainger Australian Broadcasting Authority |
| **SPEAKERS** | Dr David Buckingham Institute of Education, UK |
| | Maria Emilia Brederode de Santos formerly Portuguese Radio and Television |
| | Tatiana Merlo-Flores Universidad Catolica Argentina |
| | Stephen Nugent Australian Broadcasting Authority |
| | Dr Cecilia von Feilitzen International Clearing House on Children and Violence on the Screen, Sweden |
| | Shelley Pasnik Center for Media Education, USA |
| **ORGANISERS** | International Research Forum on Children and the Media |

This special session was chaired by **Gareth Grainger**, Deputy Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority, who began by expressing his delight that the topic of research had been included in the Second World Summit, especially as so much had come out of connections made at the First Summit in 1995. As a member of the International Scientific Committee for Youth and Media Research Forum, Grainger also mentioned its first big forum held in Paris in April 1997 under the auspices of UNESCO and the plan to organise the next in 2000. Unfortunately, the Director General of UNESCO, His Excellency Frederico Mayor, had been unable to attend today's event, but Carlos Analdo read out his message of support.

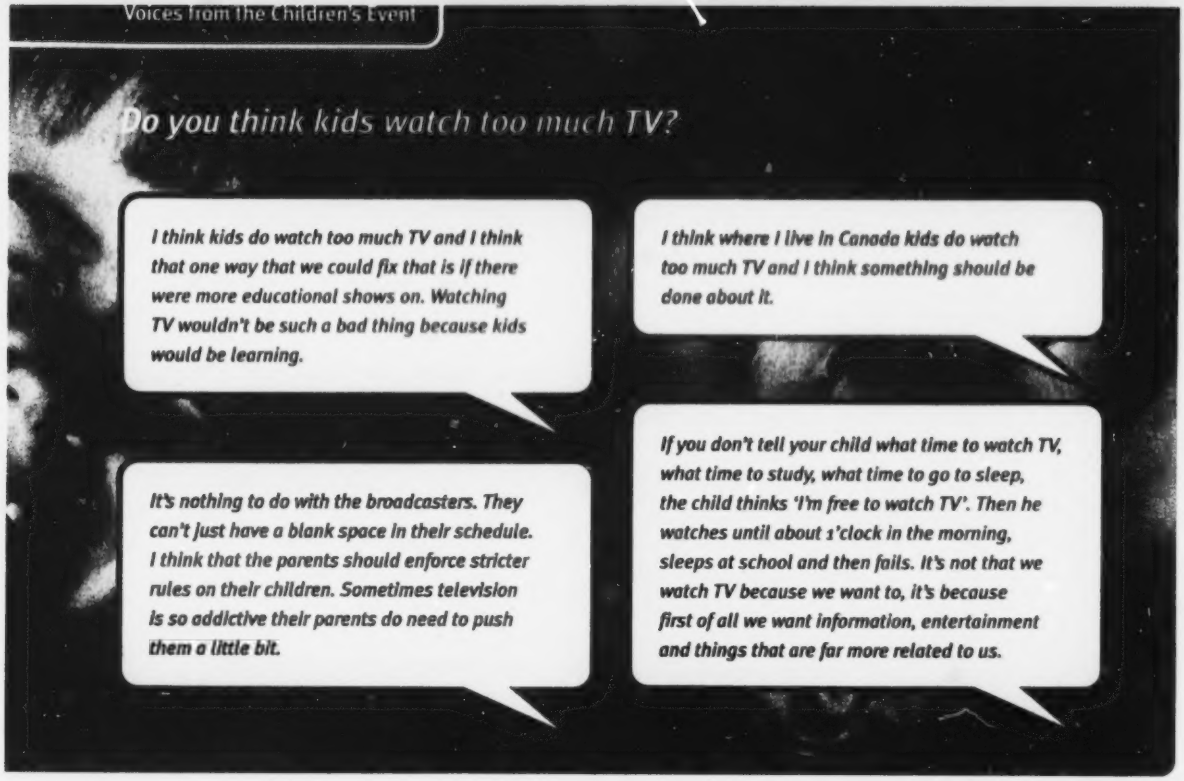
Grainger then introduced **Dr David Buckingham**, Reader in Education at the Institute of Education at London University, who had brought together the session's speakers. Buckingham explained that the idea had been to gather researchers working in quite different contexts – from industry, the academic world, regulatory bodies, and lobbying or citizens' activist groups. Speaking 'unashamedly as an academic', he wanted to take a slightly wider view of what was meant by the use of research and for whom it might be useful. Certainly for academics in Britain there was increasing pressure to account for your work in terms of its value for users. Acknowledging that research can at times be useless, partly because of the 'arcane secret code of academic writing', he was nevertheless worried that we might be moving towards a rather narrow concept of users and of usefulness. For some British funding bodies, 'users' seemed to be synonymous with people who work in industry and 'use' could mean something quite utilitarian and capable of being instantly implemented.

Convinced that some academic research could feed directly into production or into policy-making, Buckingham gave a couple of examples from his own research. The first concerned a study of two schools television programmes about racism and sexism in the media, which he found to be quite counter-productive in that the children were ignoring the commentary and so getting a very different message from the one that was intended. As well as the obvious lessons for producers, he felt that 'research can also play a more general role here – not so much in telling producers what to do, but in helping them to understand more about their audience.'

Buckingham's second example was a piece of research into children's emotional responses to television, financially supported by the Broadcasting Standards Commission in Britain, the aim being to try to progress what has become, in his view, a rather sterile debate about media violence. Suspecting that parents were actually more worried that their children were being upset or disturbed by violence rather than the idea that it might make them violent, he undertook to find out what children found upsetting and how they coped with those experiences: 'My argument was, and certainly the finding of the research was, that those experiences could be both positive and negative and that rather than seeking to prevent children having those experiences we need to learn to find ways to help kids learn to cope with them.'

Similarly, Buckingham argued that research ought to feed into the public debate about children and television which, after all, formed the background against which decisions were formulated. Broadly positive about many aspects of the role of media in children's lives, he was rather less positive about the media's ability to bring about informed public debate on this issue. The current controversy about the so-called 'dumbing down' of children's television – 'the idea that we're being swamped by cheap American programming and particularly animation and that this is inevitably a bad thing' – was being informed by a mix of research, some of it quite dubious in his opinion: 'We are locked in an either/or trivial debate about whether television is or is not bad for children – as though we could make a blanket statement about that. In those debates I think producers often appear self-interested and defensive. I think producers need researchers and other critical commentators not so much to argue on their behalf, but to help to develop a more open and sophisticated debate.'

Next to speak was **Maria Emilia Brederode de Santos**, currently President of the Institute of Educational Innovation at the


Do you think kids watch too much TV?
I think kids do watch too much TV and I think that one way that we could fix that is if there were more educational shows on. Watching TV wouldn't be such a bad thing because kids would be learning.
I think where I live in Canada kids do watch too much TV and I think something should be done about it.
It's nothing to do with the broadcasters. They can't just have a blank space in their schedule. I think that the parents should enforce stricter rules on their children. Sometimes television is so addictive their parents do need to push them a little bit.
If you don't tell your child what time to watch TV, what time to study, what time to go to sleep, the child thinks 'I'm free to watch TV'. Then he watches until about 1'clock in the morning, sleeps at school and then fails. It's not that we watch TV because we want to, it's because first of all we want information, entertainment and things that are far more related to us.

Ministry of Education in Portugal but formerly Head of Research in the Children's and Youth Department at RTP, the Portuguese public television service. Expressing surprise that there had already been several references to different kinds of research in other sessions, she explained that she had mainly been involved in what she called 'formative research', in other words, research that helped to gi re a shape to a programme: 'It's a type of research that does not only happen at the beginning or end of a programme, but ideally throughout the whole production process in order to inform decision-makers.' Not just concerned with a programme's appeal, this research could also enrich the content and make it more appropriate for the target audience. It could also lend a certain coherence to a production and act as reassurance for the creative people: 'I think it helps programme makers to take risks without going too far – that you are not doing more harm than benefit.'

**Tatiana Merlo-Flores**, an author and lecturer at the Universidad Catolica Argentina, spoke about her continuing passion for research after more than 20 years in the field: 'Research is for me, and I think for everybody here, an adventure – always full of surprises. Only the truth will make us free. Maybe that is the goal which we researchers run after – we know we never get it but we have to do it anyway.'

Describing Argentina as a perfect example of a country affected by globalisation, Merlo-Flores showed a video she had made about children's views of the media in her country. From this it was clear that, despite having access to 70 cable channels, viewers vastly preferred their own locally-made programmes. To Merlo-Flores this was partially an expression of their need for an identity.

In contrast, **Stephen Nugent**, Manager of Research at the Australian Broadcasting Authority, indicated that children in Australia are increasingly turning to pay-TV and the Internet for their viewing. However, he wanted to correct the growing assumption that the popularity of more adult and family-oriented programming among children necessarily meant that they did not watch or appreciate high-quality material made specifically for them. Ratings could be misleading, especially when they didn't take into account factors such as scheduling and clashes between children's programming on different channels.

As a regulator, said Nugent, the ABA uses research surveys to monitor standards and observance of codes of practice among broadcasters, as well as to balance other input into the policy-making process through public submissions, meetings and the complaints process, all of which tended to reflect the views of particular segments of the community. They also aimed to give a voice to those often disenfranchised by other forums, among which he included children.

**Dr Cecilia von Feilitzen**, Scientific Co-ordinator of the UNESCO International Clearing House on Children and Violence on the Screen at Nordicom Gottberg University in Sweden, tended to feel that research she had undertaken over the years had usually met with a positive response. To her, the aim of research was to obtain knowledge and to discover hidden patterns. In the case of research about children and the media, she felt the outcome ought to achieve something for the children themselves and to allow their voices to be heard. It was also important to realise that different people – whether they were parents and teachers, media professionals or politicians – were interested in the



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answers to very different questions. Whereas parents might want to know more about possible harmful influences, politicians were looking for a wider perspective. A public service broadcaster might be interested in quality and diversity while the head of a commercial organisation wanted to hear about maximising profits. Meanwhile, the researcher should remain unbiased.

> *'I think producers need researchers... to help develop a more open and sophisticated debate.'*

Well aware that there was scope for the misuse of research, von Feilitzen pointed to the tendency for television channels to keep their findings secret when they chose. In her view, research into children's interests was being neglected in favour of that related to ratings and there were cases of research findings being distorted by the press. She concluded with some research results of particular relevance to the Summit audience. These showed that the incidence of children appearing as television characters in adult programming had continued to decline in Sweden, particularly on commercial television channels where they were seldom presented in their own right but more to support adult roles – a development which ran counter to the aims of both the Summit's Children's Charter and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Finally, **Shelley Pasnik**, Researcher at the Center for Media Education, a research organisation in Washington DC, spoke about an initiative launched by the Center which was looking at the nature and scope of research currently underway on the use of interactive technologies by children. Behind all the hyperbole about Cyber Tots and the 'wired generation' was a belief in the power of technology to educate, to transform and ultimately to improve the lives of all children. In the USA alone, millions of dollars were being spent on computer hardware and software for homes and schools, although there was as yet no real understanding about what new media actually do for children.

Pasnik explained that the Center had chosen to organise its own project around the most basic question of all – that is, 'Who is the child?' or, more to the point, 'Who is the child in this new media environment?' Having established that the answer is fundamentally 'someone who creates and learns and plays and shares', the Center then wanted to assess the impact of technological opportunity on all these activities. What happens, for example, when a child reaches for a photo-shot pallet rather than a box of Crayola crayons? Do technological gizmos help children to become masters of their creative expression or do pre-packaged programmes and pre-scripted stories 'squelch' imagination?

There are 58.3 million children under 14 living in the USA, said Pasnik, each one an avid learner. Children need not only to know how to interpret information once they have read it in a book, they must be able to search for, synthesise and organise information once they have found it electronically. The challenge researchers face is discerning how technological tools are transforming the way children learn, if at all, and what the next wave of products, services and environments will and should look like.

Whether aided by games, toys or an untamed imagination, children spend a good portion of their lives engaged in the business of having fun. What happens, asked Pasnik, when technology begins to dictate the nature of children's play, when boards and coloured pieces are replaced by hand-held Game Boys, when Barbie's convertible is outpaced by her computer and she begins to talk? To set up a dichotomy between high-tech toys and old-fashioned balls and baby dolls would be both a surrendering to nostalgia and a mistake. Technology isn't replacing old play patterns, it's becoming an integral part of the formation of new ones.

Scholars, policy-makers and journalists may have been examining the myriad effects that the information age is having on our societies, continued Pasnik, but so far they've all failed to ask 'At what age does citizenship begin?' The current state of research, however, is less concerned with children's sense of a civic identity and more focused on children's ability and indeed willingness to work with other children. But at the core of these projects is a more basic attempt to define the conventions of community, children's engagement with their peers and with adults and the importance of negotiation and co-operation.

Pasnik ended with an invitation for delegates to submit any feedback about this research project as it continues to develop and to let the Center know about similar research that is happening elsewhere. The Center's website is at www.cme.org/ and the name of the project is Interaction, CME's Research Initiative on Children and New Media.



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# where do you draw the line? the boundaries of children's television

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| **CHAIR** | Andy Allan Carlton Television, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Clare Mulholland formerly Independent Television Commission, UK |
| | Ellen Levy-Sarnoff UPN, USA |
| | Emilio Cartoy Diaz Television School, Argentina |
| | Kalle Fürst NRK, Norway |
| **PRODUCER** | Anne Brogan Disney Channel, UK and Sue Nott UK |
| **SPONSOR** | Independent Television Commission |

'What are the boundaries?' asked chair **Andy Allan**, Director of Programmes at Carlton Television in the UK. Clips from children's programmes from around the world and reactions to them from children, some of whom were in the audience for this session, showed that they are clearly drawn in different places in different countries.

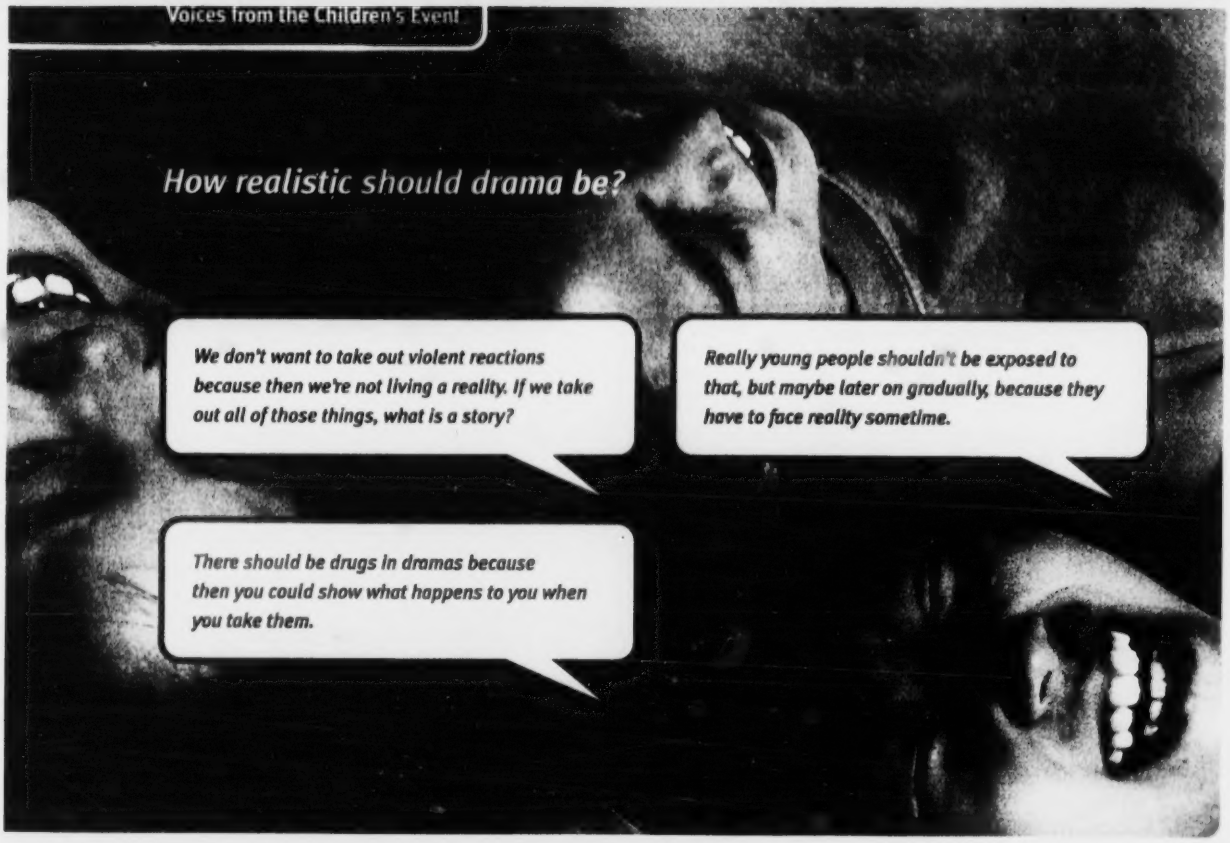
The first speaker was **Clare Mulholland**, recently retired as Deputy Chief Executive of the UK's Independent Television Commission and now a broadcasting consultant. After 26 years as a regulator, faced with complaints and protests of all kinds, she felt there was always one consolation – the common sense of the vast majority of viewers. She explained the role of the Broadcasting Act in requiring the ITC to draw up codes and guidelines for commercial broadcasters on such matters as taste and decency and violence, with particular regard to the child audience: 'The major concern is to protect children from harm, from unnecessary fear and from dangerous bad example. The trick is to find the right balance between a proper sense of responsibility and reflecting children's real lives and concerns. We have to recognise that special rules apply to designated children's programmes because children may be viewing alone and parents should be reasonably content that it's safe for them to do so.' Equally, she felt there was harm in limiting imagination or in bombarding children with merchandising plugs but that 'those harms are not mentioned so frequently.'

Mulholland then showed clips from two ITV programmes, firstly *Press Gang*, a drama series for older children produced by Sandra Hastie of Richmond Films. Here, the topic of child abuse had been dealt with by the group of young people producing their school newspaper. Mulholland felt that the 'integrity and quality of the production shone through' in what could have been a problem in less capable hands, but had been handled sensitively in conjunction with the relevant outside agency, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children – 'not just to help authenticity but to avoid confusion between television and social work. There are no absolute taboo subjects for TV drama, children's or adult,' she said. 'What matters is the treatment and context.'

Her second example was an extract from *Reboot*, an animation series using computer grahics produced by Meridian for Children's ITV. Although 19 complaints about unacceptable violence and inappropriate characters in a children's programme shown at 4.40pm might seem inconsequential from an audience of over three million children and adults, this was unusually high and therefore significant. While recognising the innovative nature of the series and the fact that this sequence was not typical, the ITC nevertheless felt that this programme had breached the programme code. Interestingly enough, however, research into children's views published by the ITC in *Cartoon Crazy* indicated that, on the whole, children had not been worried by the violence in this particular extract. Concluding, Mulholland felt that 'what counts most is the judgement, experience and integrity of the producers and broadcasters. But it's right that they should take account of parents' and children's concerns, otherwise children's television will not be in a proper sense the safe haven that I believe society expects.'

A kiss in *Power Rangers* was the focus of the next contribution from **Ellen Levy-Sarnoff**, Vice President of Children's Programming on the American United Paramount Network (UPN), responsible for such award-winning series as *Jumanji* and *The Incredible Hulk* and, while at Saban, the development of *Power Rangers*. Having taken great pains to handle this poignant moment between Kimberley the Pink Ranger and Tommy the Green Ranger with sensitivity, they were bombarded with calls from irate parents who had never bothered to complain about the violence to which pressure groups had taken such exception.

Her second *Power Rangers* experience had been equally surprising. In this instance, the storyline had to contend with the departure of four of the original six actors by sending them to a World Summit for Peace in Geneva. By the time of production,


How realistic should drama be?
We don't want to take out violent reactions because then we're not living a reality. If we take out all of those things, what is a story?
Really young people shouldn't be exposed to that, but maybe later on gradually, because they have to face reality sometime.
There should be drugs in dramas because then you could show what happens to you when you take them.

the actors had already left to seek their fortune elsewhere, and doubles had to be used for the farewell scene. The reaction from parents and children was extraordinary, with tales of children having nightmares and not eating because their television friends had disappeared without so much as a party. 'In the 15 years that I've been doing children's programming I really can't think of an episode that has really haunted me so much and taught me so much,' said Levy-Sarnoff. 'We had done something totally unacceptable by ignoring the intelligence and emotional complexity of our core audience. What I learned is that most children comprehend and will not be hurt by fantasy violence nor will a kiss on the lips hurt either. However, their little hearts will be crushed by the mistreatment or the mishandled loss of a character that is dear to them. Too often what we adults deem as unacceptable for children has no real negative effect on their cognitive, social or moral development yet the things in life that are so important to them, like friendship and love, can so easily be overlooked because of our own hasty creative decisions, misconception and ignorance.'

**Dr Dale Kunkel**, Associate Professor of Communication at the University of California in Santa Barbara, was asked to comment in his role as researcher into the effects of television violence. Suggesting that imitation or copycat incidents were the least common type of effect, he pointed to what he saw as the 'slow cumulative effect that results from prolonged or regular patterns in children's programming' which may indeed involve violence. Although people proclaimed the importance of context, he felt that such cumulative effects could come into play when an attractive character committed justified violence with unrealistically mild results and no long-term negative consequences. He wondered to what extent boundaries in children's television were grounded more in a sense of what is acceptable to parents than in what truly poses a risk to children.

Certainly this was the view of two of the children in the audience who had appeared in the opening video. Even so, they expressed the view that younger children might be confused by coming across fictional violence for the first time. Further comment came from **Kathleen McDonnell**, Canadian author of *Kid Culture*, who praised the integral role being played by children in the Summit. She recounted the demise of *Power Rangers* in Canada, one of the only countries to ban the series. Complaints about the martial arts fighting sequences had reached the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) and panic over the series proceeded to snowball, with people who had never seen the show denouncing it as responsible for 'the destruction of Western values and the world as we know it. It really struck me how people become instant experts, how little parents really knew about the style and presentation of the kind of children's television that their kids were watching.'

The next speaker was **Emilio Cartoy Diaz**, Director of Tea Imagen at the Television School in Argentina and children's producer, who showed an excerpt from *Hastos las manos*, a live show lasting one-and-a-half hours which is shown during peaktime on Saturdays. Translated as 'hands on', the title reflects the



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programme's aim of hearing from youngsters directly about their needs and concerns in areas as varied as anorexia, football, families and, in this case, living on the street. Each week, seven different people aged between nine and 17 are brought together from contrasting backgrounds, two of whom are from the more rural interior of the country. For the first time, they are given the chance to speak for themselves, without intermediaries and without censorship. There is also a phone-in element, with a supporting helpline available for those who want to talk more fully and confidentially about their concerns.

*'There are no absolute taboo subjects for TV drama, children's or adult. What matters is the treatment and context.'*

'All of us who work in mass communication media have the privilege of contacting thousands of people,' commented Cartoy Diaz. 'At the same time, this is an enormous responsibility, above all when we work with youngsters.' As the programme's popularity had grown, he explained, it became clear that parents as well as their children were watching it, using it as a starting-point for more open communication in the home. Schools had also endorsed it as an educational tool, recognising its value as a way of tackling everything from alcoholism to teenage motherhood.

Finally, **Kalle Fürst**, Head of the Children's and Youth Department at NRK, explained that the system of self-regulation in Norway meant that he had to stand by his own decisions about what to show on television. Whereas he would be very restrictive in his choice of material for very young children watching alone, he felt that most topics could be dealt with in situations where children viewed with their parents. In the daily children's slot from 6.00pm to 6.30pm, for example, a long-established and highly rating fixture for children of up to eight or ten, most of whom watch with their parents, he felt able to show a programme called *Trøbbel* dealing with child sex abuse: 'Because incest is a very delicate and sensitive topic to deal with, we made a programme the night before for parents and that made it possible for them to decide whether or not their child should watch the programme.' Highly critical of 'American cultural imperialism where they dump their rubbish into the international market' represented in his eyes by *Power Rangers*, he found it interesting that Fox Kids, newly arrived in Norway, had decided not to schedule the series because it would have adversely affected the perception of the channel among parents. Even the market could be controlled by public opinion.

The same phenomenon also appeared to be playing a role in different countries' views about the cartoon character Pingu wetting himself. As **Silvio Mazzola**, *Pingu*'s producer, explained, this particular episode and another about nightmares had caused problems with some broadcasters and had provoked complaints from parents where it had been shown. Public opinion was also key when it came to commercial broadcasters dependent upon ratings who therefore felt unable to run more risky programmes. **Marcel Ford**, General Manager of a commercial station in Jamaica, felt it was important for societies to acknowledge their cultural differences. Finally, **Nkem Orakwue**, an independent producer from Glorious Diamond Productions in Nigeria, expressed the concern felt by many parents about the type of programming available to their children from other countries. As Allan concluded from the chair, the debate would continue.

***'Acceptability of certain programmes is as diverse as the programmes should be. Commotion about a kiss in* Power Rangers *in the US is unbelievable to other countries who really don't want to transmit this show because of the violence in it.'***

**Danielle Lunenborg** agent provocateur



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# viva vernacular!
# does anyone here speak english?

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Huw Jones S4C Wales |
| **SPEAKERS** | Rosie Simonfalvy Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, Canada |
| | Francisco Machado Yat Film School, Portugal |
| | Maire Ni Thuathail Eo Teilifis Teo, Ireland |
| | Caroline Loup European Commission |
| **PRODUCER** | Frances Hendron Celtic Film and Television Association, Scotland |
| **SUPPORT** | EU DGXXII Programme for the Protection of Minority and Regional Languages and Cultures |

Chair **Huw Jones**, Chief Executive of S4C in Wales, began the session with some startling statistics. It is estimated that half of the current total of over 6,000 languages spoken around the world will become extinct during the next century. Of the remaining 3,000, two-thirds will be threatened during the following century. As he said, some people applauded this trend. Back in 1994, Rupert Murdoch had expressed the view that major languages were spreading more widely because everyone wanted to watch the best television programming. Others might well feel differently when it was their own language which was disappearing from the 'schoolyards and streets'. Jones attributed the threat to a combination of factors: economic migration, cultural dominance of the majority language, centralised education policies but, these days, above all 'the arrival of television in the home with its attractive aspirational images proclaiming to susceptible young minds, many hour a day, the message that culturally it's all happening somewhere else and in someone else's language.'

He reported that a number of countries had now realised the cultural value of lesser used languages and had taken steps to implement relevant broadcasting initiatives. Some viewed these as a gesture towards an older generation, in which case children's television had no part. Others had consciously adopted a language development policy, of which broadcasting for children was seen as a key component although, inevitably, it had to compete with other priorities for funding. Jones hoped that the session would prove a useful sharing of the particular problems facing broadcasters working in this area.

Before introducing his speakers, Jones outlined briefly the situation in his own country. Recognising that the 'Welsh language has been the subject of one of the most committed initiatives in respect of minority languages that the world has probably seen,' Jones explained that S4C receives substantial government funding in addition to advertising income. Even so, reaching children was not easy, especially as all Welsh-speaking children from the age of about six are bilingual, sometimes precisely because of their exposure to the high-quality English programming on offer from mainstream channels and cable and satellite. S4C aims to create a perception of normality for the language amongst Welsh-speaking children: 'We want them to have heroes of their own which are only available to them in Welsh,' said Jones, 'and we want them to have programmes whose content in some way is of particular relevance to their lives.' There is thus little point in dubbing popular English programmes which will already be familiar to them.

Of 110 hours of children's programmes broadcast in 1997, only 11 hours were acquired and six hours were co-produced. On offer to children are a twice-weekly magazine show, a news strand and a twice-weekly 15-minute drama series, in addition to game shows, factual programmes, occasional music and comedy and some pre-school programmes. S4C has been involved in some major co-produced animation series on the Bible and Shakespeare, and Jones mentioned the proposed international co-production of animated children's tales involving 26 countries to be discussed the following day.

According to Jones, figures show that 130,000 viewers tune in to the magazine programme at some point during the week and that 28 per cent of Welsh-speaking girls up to the age of 15 watch the children's drama. Most pleasing is the fact that the percentage of Welsh-speaking young people has risen from 16 per cent to 24 per cent in the first ten years of the channel, with television undoubtedly helping to give the language status plus an opportunity for nurturing new talent: 'This is one of the many reasons why I believe that the creation of television for children in a minority language can be a crucially important component in the process of stabilising and reversing decline which might otherwise seem inevitable,' concluded Jones.

From a rather different perspective, **Rosie Simonfalvy**, Executive Producer with the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation in Canada, expressed thanks for her invitation to what in her language was called 'the Queen's town'. She explained that her company's

mandate was to provide more than 25,000 Inuit in Arctic Canada with a broadcasting service 'designed to strengthen our language, culture and identity'. The aim is to use the opportunity provided by modern technology to give Inuit people freedom of expression through their own language, Inuktitut, and thus an active role in the Canadian nation. Rooted in an old way of life, the language nevertheless provides a bridge to contemporary concerns and a link between generations, as demonstrated in a clip from *Takuginai*. The programme's title means 'Look Here' and celebrates Inuit values of community and respect for elders with kindness and fun using both real people and puppets.

> *'Minority language television can be a crucially important component in the process of stabilising and reversing decline.'*

By contrast, **Francisco Machado**, Director of Yat Film School in Lisbon and a founder member of the European Children's Television Centre, said that although Portuguese could not be considered a minority language – there are 180 million speakers around the world – it was a minority market. He felt it important to maintain a balance between a universal language and the hidden elements of small communities likely to be lost unless diversity was promoted. Making a parallel with computers being overfed with data, he feared that children were being overwhelmed with the quantity of material being aimed at them in the interests of culture, education and entertainment.

Jones then introduced **Maire Ni Thuathail**, Managing Director of the Irish independent production company Eo Teilifis Teo and 1997's Businesswoman of the Year in Ireland. She recounted the story behind the making of the co-production *Mire Mara*, involving broadcasters from Wales, Scotland and Ireland from its beginning as a series of workshops which also encompassed the Catalans and Basques. The idea was to identify the objectives of such a programme, with views gathered from educationalists, writers, linguists and psychologists as well as programme-makers. From this it was decided that the target group should be pre-school children whose first language was a minority language and who were thus excluded from many facets of modern life because they were living in a world dominated by another culture. The project was seen as an opportunity to give these children a positive self-image through affirmative role models and peer credibility.

These 'idealistic and quite theoretical' goals provided a starting-point for building a high-quality 15-minute format, 75 per cent of which was a core programme and the rest locally generated. Music, storytelling and drama were seen as particularly useful vehicles and it was decided to use puppets for the core segment, flowing naturally into human characters for the different regions. Training was essential for all those not experienced in puppetry and it was at this point that it became evident that the same funds were not available for producers from the Catalan and Basque communities, both of whom had to drop out of the project leaving Eo Teilifis from Ireland, Abu Tele from Scotland and Orbis Productions in Wales to carry it forward. Writers from each country worked with an Irish script editor, and puppets were made in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. 'I feel that one of the most successful aspects of this project was the true nature of the co-production', commented Ni Thuathail, 'where we all benefited not only from one another's experience but also from each other's networks and contacts.' Launched in its home countries in the mid-1990s, *Mire Mara* has since been sold in every continent except North America.

Finally, **Caroline Loup**, from DGXXII of the European Commission, explained that the European Union had been working to promote and safeguard minority languages for the last 15 years. Each of the 50 minority languages in Europe has its own particular problems, some with a strong identity such as Catalan and some on the verge of disappearance such as Mirandese, already mentioned by the Portuguese speaker. The Commission's priority is not just broadcasting but also the press and a range of educational materials and courses, as well as the funding of conferences to encourage co-operation between communities facing the same challenges. Stressing her support for initiatives in children's broadcasting, Loup recognised that television was now a big part of any child's environment and that it was important that it should play its part in keeping the 'cultural wealth' of Europe.

A wide-ranging discussion followed concerning funding, lobbying, programme quality and co-operation with contributions from the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, the Maori language in New Zealand, Gaelic broadcasting in Scotland, and a multiplicity of languages in South Africa. In conclusion, **Meirion Davies**, Commissioning Editor for Children's Programmes at S4C, proposed that the amended Children's Charter should include a clearer definition of indigenous languages and their promotion through children's broadcasting (see Beyond the Children's Charter on page 95).



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# media education: snapshots from three countries

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|---|---|
| CHAIR | Yvonne Davies Television Junction, UK |
| SPEAKERS | Stella Hortop teacher, Durban, South Africa<br>Dr Larissa Bazhenova teacher trainer, Moscow, Russia<br>Dr Ingrid Geretschlaeger teacher trainer, Austria |
| PRODUCERS | Cary Bazalgette British Film Institute |

This session could have simply asked how teaching about the media is carried out in different countries. Instead, it tried something completely different – an experiment in comparative media education. Teachers from South Africa, Moscow and Austria had been set the task of viewing a piece of television with their pupils and colleagues in order to discuss the reactions and to explore possible strategies for using it to help children learn more about the media.

Chair **Yvonne Davies**, Managing Director of UK independent production company Television Junction, explained that the piece chosen was not actually made for children. The five-minute animation called *Growing*, made by **Alison Hempstock** and first broadcast on Channel 4 in the UK in a late-night slot, was described as 'an intriguing piece of media to look at and in some ways more culture-free than some of the other television that we watch.'

The audience was then shown the short film which followed the cycle of planting, growing and harvesting through strong images in vivid colour and extreme close-up, using cell animation and a soundtrack of naturalistic noises.

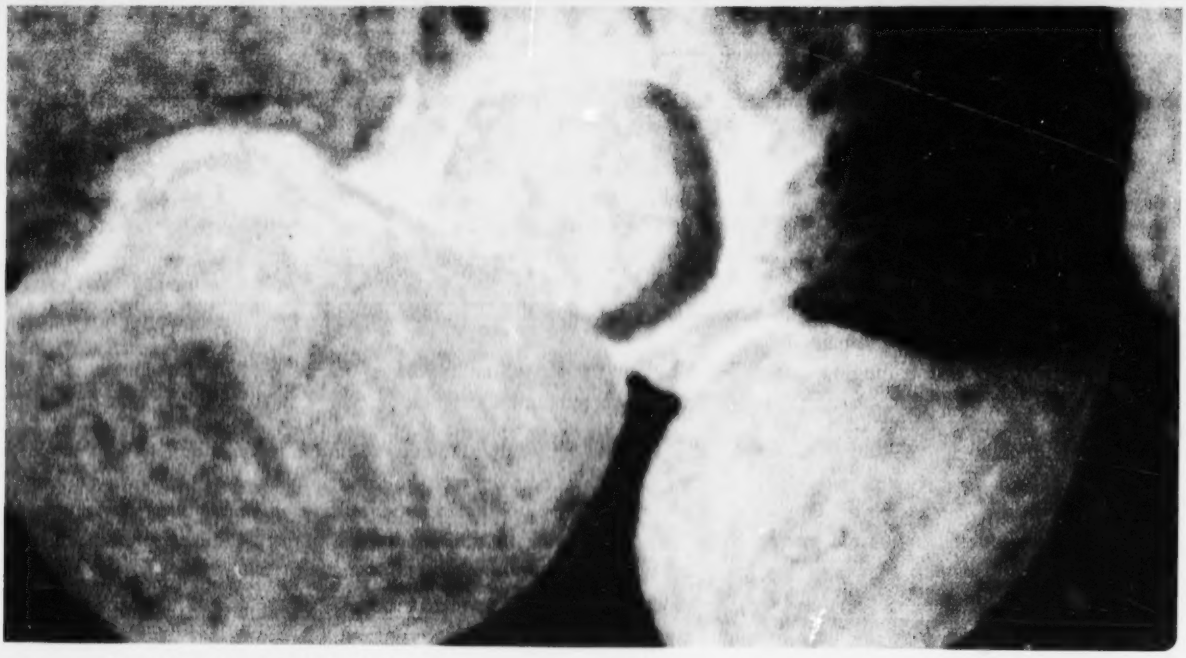
First to give feedback was **Stella Hortop**, Principal of Manor Gardens Primary School in Durban, South Africa. She reported that the film had been used in two different schools: one her own, with pupils mainly from a middle-class background, two-thirds of the class of eight-year-olds having English as their first language; the other, North Crest, with pupils from the township of Kwalamashu whose mother tongue was Zulu. With more time, she would have subsumed the media education component into a wider project about 'growing' and encouraged the children to grow their own plants. Instead she tackled the subject in four weekly parts.

Firstly, having suggested that the children might need some cues to make meaning from the film, Hortop asked them to tell her what was happening: 'Soil is cracking to make space for plants' and 'bulbs are bursting' were some typical answers. With some guidance, they were also able to divide the film up under different headings: 'Preparing the soil', 'Planting', 'Growing', 'Picking' and either 'Finishing Off' or 'Starting Again'. Meanwhile, her colleague tried similar approaches, finding that her children focused on pumpkins in their writing, one of the staple foods in the townships. They worked out songs, plays or dances, captured by the teacher on an amateur video.

For the second element, Hortop brought some fruit and vegetables into the class and encouraged the pupils to draw them and also to write about them in the form of short poems. Their words picked up on the sound effects and vigorous growth depicted on the video: 'Sunflower, orangey-yellow, tearing, erupting, cracking, exploding from the earth, seeds.' They discussed the idea that the film had been made for a particular audience, perhaps to provide information or for fun, and also explored the mix of mid-shots and close-ups.

Thirdly, Hortop asked them to sequence shots, exploring the idea of an establishing shot and the reasons for choosing certain kinds of shot. They tried this themselves with frames made of scrap paper. They thought of words to describe the soundtrack and made instruments of their own to create sound effects. Finally, they discussed the purpose of the film and the idea that some material had been selected and the rest omitted. Would they have preferred words, for instance? 'No words is fine because farmers don't talk while growing plants, they will get disturbed, they might make a mistake while they are planting,' was one reply. For Hortop, the experience 'reaffirmed the importance of including media education as an integral part of our curriculum.'

**Dr Larissa Bazhenova**, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre of Aesthetic Education in Moscow, then recounted her experience working with children aged between seven and nine. First she explained that although the term 'media education' had only been used in Russia since the late 1980s, the idea of studying all types of media in schools had been around since much earlier in the century. In her own institution, a programme called 'The Basics of Screen Culture' is taught at all levels and includes a mix of analytical and practical exercises.



*Growing*: the animation chosen for the media education exercise

As Bazhenova observed, the chosen animation was 'subjectless' in its lack of characters and thus of human conflict, but dealt with the eternal subject of man and nature. Having decided to divide work on the film into three parts, the first stage involved clarifying the children's initial impressions of the film and how it related to their own experience, perhaps seeing vegetables grow outside Moscow at their dachas. From this they moved on to discussion about the film-maker's intentions ('He probably loves to grow things and loves nature') and techniques ('It's all close up and it hurts my eyes to watch it'). Finally the children were encouraged to follow through the ideas in the film with some related practical work which included creating their own images of flowers and vegetables.

*'Media education can be started from a very early age.'*

The third speaker, **Dr Ingrid Geretschlaeger**, a teacher trainer from the University of Leipzig in Austria, applauded the inclusion of media education in the World Summit's programme as something positive rather than in its usual role of 'just repairing what the media do or what they're supposed to do'. Having shown the film to children aged eight and nine, she also used it with four- and five-year-olds and with some trainee teachers from the former East Germany. Not wanting to duplicate her fellow speakers' accounts - and noting that there was little cultural difference in people's reactions – she focused on additional insights that she could provide. Among these was the observation that whereas the slightly older age group was quite resistant to what it saw as neither informative nor entertaining, the kindergarten children were more curious and motivated to work with the film despite finding its lack of introductory music and story quite confusing. As Geretschlaeger explained, 'I think that's one aspect for starting very early to introduce children to such a piece of artwork; they are open to new kinds of ideas. The others are rather seriously hooked to commercial products already ... and they don't really want to get involved in other things they are not used to.'

The reaction from the trainee teachers was mixed. Some felt uncomfortable with the idea of using a film with children that they found rather aggressive and brutal. Others found it interesting and could see its potential. Geretschlaeger's own feeling was that media education had an important role to play in opening up increasing lines of communication within society in a responsible way. Even if it was integrated into the school curriculum, much depended upon the competence and enthusiasm of individual teachers to get involved.

Audience comments ranged from those taken aback to see an 'art film' used as the subject of media education to those interested in its potential to stimulate practical activity in the primary classroom. One contributor was concerned that the work the three teachers had done did not address ideology. Intense debate about the nature and purpose of media education between participants from widely differing backgrounds continued after the end of the formal session.

***'I hope that some of the things said here today, 'locally' in London, will have a practical effect on children's television 'globally'.'***

**Danielle Lunenborg** agent provocateur



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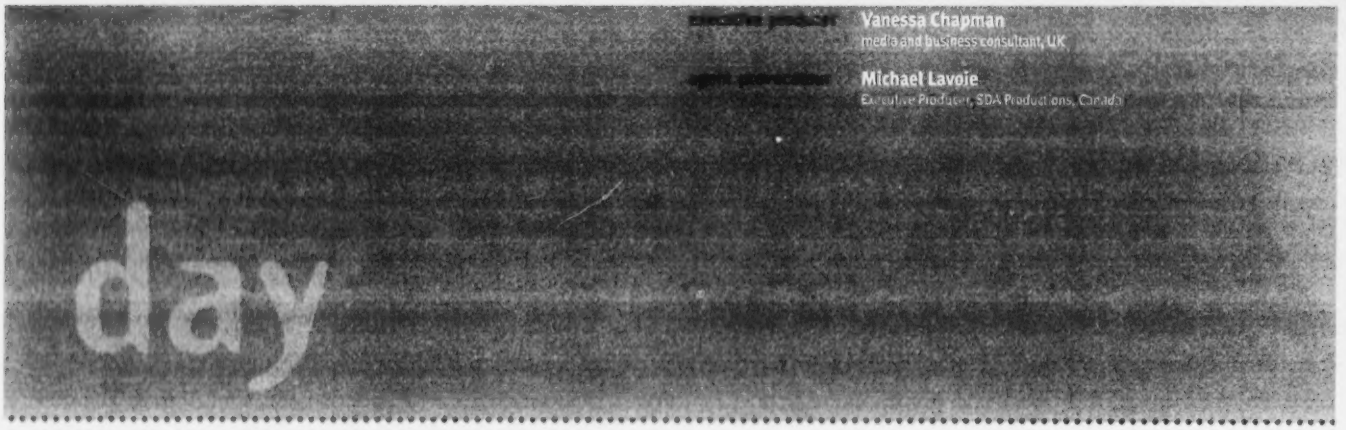


# 3 finance

children's television as a business – is it? should it be?

**who will pay?**

the new gatekeepers

**the co-production cabaret**

the world's our stage – an animated co-production to beat all others

**show me the money! funding organisations and children's television**

white knight or dragon? the role of advertising in children's programming

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# children's television as a business – is it? should it be?

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAIR | Nigel Pickard ITV Network Centre, UK |
| SPEAKER | Janet Holmes à Court Chairman, Australian Children's Television Foundation |
| PRODUCER | Vanessa Chapman media and business consultant, UK |

**Vanessa Chapman**, UK media and business consultant, welcomed the audience to the finance day of the Summit, during which sessions would focus on how quality children's programming could be funded in an increasingly competitive and fragmented marketplace. **Nigel Pickard**, Controller of Network Children's Programmes for ITV in the UK, then introduced **Janet Holmes à Court** as keynote speaker, in his view superbly qualified to open the day's debate on finance within children's television. Currently chairman of the Australian Children's Television Foundation which has been responsible for many series known around the world, she also has many international business dealings as Chairman of Heytesbury, a company with extensive worldwide interests including a construction and engineering company, Stoll Moss theatres in London's West End, a thoroughbred horses complex and a vineyard.

### Janet Holmes à Court

'In its most simple form, a business makes a product which it sells to consumers. It provides opportunities for stakeholders, its financiers and its employees, and it provides a return on investment to its shareholders. By this simple definition, children's television is in fact a business. Producers make programmes, broadcasters buy them and screen them to the consumers. Sometimes these broadcasters are also the producers.

It sounds pretty simple, but to me there are some major factors which make this business different from any other. You may produce a series, you may desperately want it to be screened, but you must first find a broadcaster with a licence who will buy it. A business which has at its very base a licence which is restricted is a business which is based on privilege. Privilege carries with it responsibility, and nowhere is this responsibility of television greater than it is in its dealings with children. Children, who are the broadcasters' consumers, are vulnerable, they're dependent, they're developing, they are precious and they are our future. As adults we owe a great responsibility to them. I cannot stress how important I feel this is.

So yes, children's television is certainly a business and it's a business which is becoming bigger every year. As well as being different, as I've described, it's particularly interesting, as is reflected in the range of people in attendance at this Summit: broadcasters, producers, researchers, teachers, regulators, lobbyists, politicians. On the one hand, you have your connections with the global film, television, entertainment, communications industries, huge high-profile powerful industries; on the other hand, you are directly connected with children who watch your programmes in your own communities. The merit of your programmes is scrutinised by lobby groups, it's reviewed by regulators and queried by parents. The commercial environment in which you work is becoming more competitive every year. At the same time the demands of the community in terms of the standards that it expects from television for children always remain in the forefront of what you do. If children's television was only a business, many of the people here would be *out* of business. The programmes we make are not profitable and they would not be made had market forces been left to their own devices.

> *'Children, who are the broadcasters' consumers, are vulnerable, they're dependent, they're developing, they are precious and they are our future.'*

Selling commercial airtime and delivering the largest possible audiences to the advertisers is what commercial broadcasting is all about. Within this environment children's television is vulnerable and commercial broadcasters around the world have provided ample demonstration of what happens when it is left to the mercy of commercial networks. Either it virtually ceases to exist or it's completely dictated by commercial considerations and therefore dominated by cheap imports, toy tie-ins and the spin-off potential of the programmes that are screened.

### Regulation

In November last year the Broadcasting Standards Commission in the UK released a report analysing what broadcasters have been screening for children in this country over the last few years. That report quoted ITV executives who said very frankly:



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"Without protectionist regulations, minority schedules like children's cannot easily be preserved from encroachment on their budgets and resources from other areas of broadcasting with better ratings prospects."

Our experience in Australia is exactly the same. Australian commercial broadcasters must screen minimum levels of programming for children and pre-schoolers daily. But as distinct from ordinary C programmes which can include a range of magazine and imported programmes, the networks must screen 32 hours of first release Australian children's drama each year. These requirements are a condition of the right to hold a television broadcasting licence in our country and they are highly resented by the networks.

Even America, the greatest free-market economy of them all, has found it necessary to regulate children's television. But the arguments and responses to regulation are similar wherever the debate takes place. American commercial broadcasters caution that children won't watch shows which meet the FCC requirement to be educational, while producers argue that this depends on how well made they are and what financial resources are made available to make them.

Commercial television networks can only show high-quality children's material because it is subsidised. There would be no commercial market for Australian children's drama in Australia without regulation. This is a business which must be protected but regulation on its own is not sufficient. Money is still needed to make these programmes and the big question you'll be asking each other today is: Where should the money come from and why should it be found at all? I repeat, it must be found because broadcasting licences are restricted. They're a privilege that implies responsibility, particularly to the child audience.

In some countries, including America and Britain, broadcasters have traditionally fully funded, or almost fully funded, the entire cost of production of commissioned programmes. This was never the case in Australia, where the market has been flooded with imports from both those countries at low prices because the full cost of production has been recovered in the home market.

Janet Holmes à Court

After many years of lobbying led by Patricia Edgar, Australia now has a three-point model which ensures the production of television programmes for children and which is the envy of the world. These are, first, the regulations of which I've already spoken, the children and pre-school and the C drama; second, government subsidies available through film funding bodies; and third, the establishment of the Australian Children's Television Foundation as a non-profit independent production company to develop, innovate and produce programmes to the highest standards.

**Government subsidy**

Our government subsidises the cost of production through the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC) which funds Australian feature films, mini-series, television drama, documentaries and children's drama. In recognition of the special importance of children's television, the government requires the FFC to devote a substantial percentage of its overall budget each year to children's drama. The FFC exists for cultural reasons and it will only fund Australian productions or official co-productions between Australia and other countries. The financial contribution the FFC makes is an investment in the production, but before it will invest, the producer must demonstrate market interest in the programme by raising 50 per cent of the budget through a combination of Australian pre-sale, international pre-sales and other investment. The FFC will then invest in the production, taking a copyright position and a recoupment position against proceeds from world sales of the programme. These funds will then be available to invest in future productions.



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The FFC requires the production company to deal with the programme astutely. It will not fund a programme where the Australian pre-sale is below the Aus$ 55,000-an-episode benchmark; neither will it fund a programme if the international pre-sales are not sufficiently high. This approach is extremely frustrating to a new producer, but in requiring all producers to adopt sound business principles, the FFC maximises the opportunity for the production industry as a whole.

*'Commercial television networks can only show high-quality children's material because it is subsidised.'*

Government investment and subsidy are also features of the film and television production industries in Canada and France, and it's no coincidence that the production of children's television has traditionally been strongest in countries where regulation and production subsidies exist.

Three years ago, at the First World Summit, many delegates spoke passionately about the dumping of American programmes in their market and the need to maintain and strengthen regulation and subsidy in order to resist the cultural invasion from the USA. In the time since then, there's been an interesting and ironic development. Recently, it was announced that CBS had entered into a two-year output deal with the Canadian producer, Nelvana, who will provide the network's entire Saturday-morning block of children's programming with six new animated productions. Nelvana is publicly on the record as saying that the deal was able to be done because, as a Canadian producer, it is able to supply the programmes to CBS for around a quarter of the cost of programming that CBS was previously fully funding. In other words, CBS is taking advantage of the lower fees that it can pay for imported programmes, programmes which are of high quality and which may in fact be being subsidised by the Canadian government.

This is a dramatic but not isolated example. Fox Children's Network has actively commenced acquiring Australian children's drama programmes including *Round the Twist*. *Bananas in Pajamas*, a programme from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, has been a major syndicated success in the USA. American independent producers have expressed concern at this turn of events. The co-head of Dreamworks Television Animation has been quoted in the trade press as saying: "You see programmes being bought for very little money because they're mainly funded out of Canada and Europe, and the USA becomes a secondary market. With all due respect to our international colleagues, it is really frightening to see the American market, which has always been the leader, being forced to take on products that may or may not be better or worse, but for the wrong reasons."

Since networks in the rest of the world have been paying less than rock-bottom prices for American programmes for years, you have to appreciate the irony of this situation. What this example does, though, is demonstrate one of the major issues facing all independent producers today. Financing independent projects is becoming more and more difficult. The volume of programming needed by American networks, especially as they buy into domestic US subscription services and develop international services, has opened up the US market which was previously obsessively parochial. This has created some opportunities for the rest of us, but at the same time don't kid yourself that you're going to have a big network sale that will set you up in clover.

**Public broadcasters**

The public broadcaster has been the traditional bailiwick of diversity, quality and local content for the child audience, but even this is changing. As governments worldwide erode their funding base, one of the strongest arguments for continued support of the public broadcasters is the service they provide to children. They can take risks with innovative material that commercial broadcasters won't touch. They can provide a service showcasing the best programmes from around the world, along with local content produced specifically for their own audience. But public broadcasters are deserting their traditional ways like rats from a sinking ship as they succumb to commercial pressures.

A revolution of gigantic proportions is under way. Public broadcasters around the world are embracing the pre-school marketing concept. *Barney* on PBS in the US, *Bananas in Pajamas* on the ABC in Australia, and *Teletubbies* in the UK have proved to be big business for public broadcasters. But the big business is not the sale of the television programme, although it is essential to kick-start everything else. Each one of these programmes I've mentioned is a merchandising bonanza.

In Australia, Phillip Adams has written: "There should be an age of consent for commerce just as there is for sex." He argues that corporations should not have the right to kidnap young imaginations using them as appropriate targets for manipulating marketing exercises, and he calls advertisers who target children "the child molesters of the airwaves".



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I agree that young children should not be treated as consumers. I appreciate merchandising that extends and enhances a child's enjoyment of a programme: music, tapes, books. I draw the line, however, at characters and symbols sprayed over absolutely everything in a child's world from sheets and curtains to drinking straws. I admit that merchandising is a legitimate way of generating income for children's programmes, as long as the educational and entertainment philosphy of the programme clearly comes first. What I do question is the emphasis that public broadcasters in particular now place on merchandising-driven shows. I urge you all to consider the effect that the success of these programmes may have on the diversity for pre-schoolers and on the provision of programmes for older children. The tail is in great danger of wagging the dog.

Recently a pan-European study found that all public broadcasters in this region with the exception of Channel 4, ZDF and Danmarks Radio have presided over a decline in the amount of domestically produced programmes they screen and a rise in the amount of cartoons they screen, predominantly US imports. The report warned against a growing trend of treating children as consumers first and developing individuals second.

There are no easy answers, but in recognising that financing children's television is difficult, you should consider the following. Firstly, public broadcasters should affirm their commitment to the service of children. Their programmes should innovate, they should use the best talent and they should come from a wide range of producers and in a wide range of styles for each age group. Secondly, wherever subsidy exists for film and television production, ensure that some part of that subsidy is set aside for the production of high quality children's television by independent producers.

Thirdly, we need to address the fact that the fees paid for children's programmes around the world no longer reflect the true value of those programmes. Producers everywhere are being squeezed. The Children's Charter states that: "Sufficient funds must be made available to make these programmes to the highest possible standards," but fails to specify where those funds should come from. It goes on to say that "Governments, production distribution and funding organisations should recognise the importance and vulnerability of indigenous children's television and take steps to support and protect it." The role of the broadcaster is completely overlooked. We should address that issue, especially now that some broadcasters are generating additional and substantial funds from their merchandising activities with no evidence that these funds are returning to programming.

Fourthly, we need to strike a balance between our commitment to local programmes and our commitment to the best quality programme wherever it comes from. Co-productions and co-operation between countries are also important. Fully financing quality programmes in one country alone, even in the USA, will be a rare event in the future, and events like this Summit enable us to begin to talk about working together in the interests of our audiences in all other countries.

Fifthly, and for me almost most importantly, this industry, this business, should not be driven by market forces alone. The range, depth, quality and innovation of the best children's television will suffer as a result if it is. So continue to fight for and support regulation for children's television in all countries.

Yes, children's television is a business. It is one which must be protected, regulated and balanced in the best interests of its audience. If we go down the path of excessive commercialism, we will rob our audiences of the tremendous opportunities that a diverse range of well-conceived programmes can provide. We will lose the support of our communities for our work and we will lose our audience – the children who are the very reason for our existence."

*This is an edited version of Janet Holmes à Court's speech.*

***'Janet Holmes à Court set the table brilliantly for the rest of the day's exchanges.'***

**Michael Lavoie** agent provocateur

# who will pay?

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAIR | Micheline Charest CINAR, Canada |
| SPEAKERS | Tim Westcott TBI, UK<br>David Britt Children's Television Workshop, USA<br>Susanne Müller ZDF, Germany<br>Ron Saunders Southern Star Pacific, Australia<br>Rod Henwood Fox Kids, UK |
| PRODUCER | Dan Maddicott United Film and Television Productions, UK |
| SPONSOR | United Film and Television Productions |

There may be the best intentions to produce the kind of quality, diverse programming that the audience is looking for, but who is going to pay for it? Before introducing her speakers, chair **Micheline Charest**, Chairman and CEO of the Canadian independent production company CINAR Films, explained that the focus of the discussion would be on the more mature television markets. This was not to exclude those countries with poorer resources, but rather a recognition that the issues facing them were quite different and that the topic could not be spread too wide. She also highlighted a few of the changes affecting this market, namely fragmentation through the proliferation of new outlets, the impact of large corporations involved not only in broadcasting but also in distribution and production (ie vertical integration) and the dearth of government resources.

*'There is no evidence that broadcasters collectively are spending less now than they did five or even ten years ago.'*

Speaking first, **Tim Westcott**, Editorial Director of UK-based publication *Television Business International (TBI)*, reported on a survey carried out for the Summit with the aim of identifying the main trends among broadcasters in terms of money spent on children's programming around the world. The 40 replies fell into three categories – 15 public service broadcasters, 15 commercial broadcasters and 10 children's-only broadcasters – and the majority were from Europe and North America.

Nineteen of the services had been launched since 1980 and 12 of them in the last ten years, confirming that this was definitely an expanding market. Westcott said that the amount of annual spend varied from US$93 million by the BBC for 1997 and US$64 million by ITV, through US$18.2 million by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the USA, to US$1 million by Antenna 1 in Greece. Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon intended to invest US$400 million and US$350 million respectively in original animation over the next five years.

Commercial and children's-only broadcasters were likely to be spending more or at least the same in future; public broadcasters were more likely to be cutting budgets.

The advent of specialist children's channels has massively increased the number of programme hours, said Westcott, with 24-hour networks transmitting nearly 9,000 hours annually and most others about half that amount. Overall, public broadcasters tend to carry more children's programming than commercial broadcasters: ABC in Australia, NHK in Japan, France 3 and the BBC all scheduled over 1,000 hours in 1997 and PBS distributed nearly 3,800. Among commercial broadcasters, Canada's WIC scheduled over 4,000 hours and Germany's Super RTL about 1,480, while others such as the US networks carried only three hours a week.

Westcott reported that, on average, public broadcasters devoted 32 per cent of their schedule to animation, compared to 69 per cent on commercial networks and 55 per cent on children's-only channels. All three categories showed a similar amount of live-action drama, but while public service broadcasters allocated almost 50 per cent of their time to other forms of live action, this made up only 12 per cent on commercial networks and 26 per cent on specialist channels. Within these averages, however, there are some extremes: public broadcaster France 3 devoted 95 per cent of its 1997 children's schedule to animation, much of it produced in-house, while for Nine Network in Australia this amounted to only 7 per cent.

Programme origination emphasises the divide between categories, said Westcott. Overall, public broadcasters produce 25 per cent of their children's schedules in-house and commission a further eight per cent from independent producers. Exceptionally, the BBC produces 65 per cent itself, while ZDF makes 20 per cent, CBC 30 per cent and ABC 27 per cent. Commercial broadcasters rely more heavily on acquired material and, in particular, animation from the US. Several of the American specialist channels, such as Cartoon Network, the Disney Channel, Nickelodeon and Fox Kids, draw heavily on material accumulated in programme libraries.



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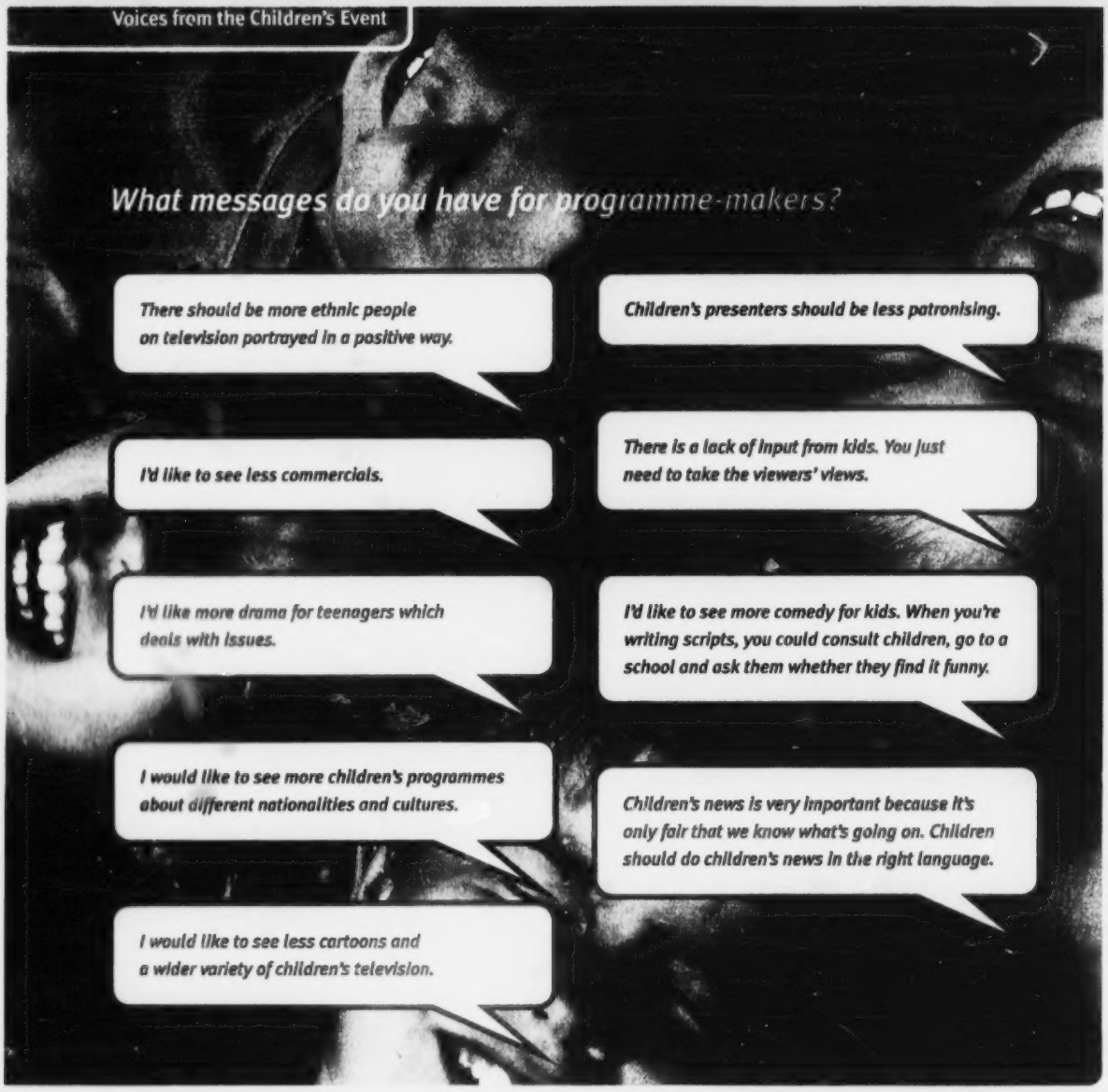
What messages do you have for programme-makers?
There should be more ethnic people on television portrayed in a positive way.
Children's presenters should be less patronising.
I'd like to see less commercials.
There is a lack of input from kids. You just need to take the viewers' views.
I'd like more drama for teenagers which deals with issues.
I'd like to see more comedy for kids. When you're writing scripts, you could consult children, go to a school and ask them whether they find it funny.
I would like to see more children's programmes about different nationalities and cultures.
Children's news is very important because it's only fair that we know what's going on. Children should do children's news in the right language.
I would like to see less cartoons and a wider variety of children's television.

In conclusion, Westcott argued that there was 'no evidence that broadcasters collectively are spending less now than they did five or even ten years ago.' Indeed, the survey found that there was a wider range of funding sources than five years before, with each contributor likely to be spending more. More commercial hours are being filled by acquired material, however, putting the US majors in a strong position to meet global demand. Co-production is on the increase, especially among public broadcasters, with independent producers and distribution companies becoming increasingly pivotal.

**David Britt**, President of the Children's Television Workshop in the USA, spoke next. As an independent producer, his view was that there had been a huge proliferation of demand for material, which in turn was intensifying competition for funding among producers and allowing distributors to offer lower fees. In addition, it was increasingly important to devote money to promoting programmes in order for them to stand out in a crowded marketplace. For his own area, educational programmes, these funding challenges were particularly great. Although 'the show and its curriculum continue to come first', he was prepared to find funding wherever he could, without being wedded to any particular model. This was likely to include more co-production, something his own company had been involved in for many years with *Sesame Street*.

**Susanne Müller**, Head of Children's Programmes at ZDF in Germany, then outlined the birth of Kinderkanal, the joint venture between public broadcasters ARD and ZDF launched in January 1997, mentioning that discussions on the subject had first begun during the First World Summit in Melbourne. She explained that since the advent of commercial broadcasting in Germany a little over ten years ago, the public broadcasters, part-funded by advertising, had experienced severe pressure on children's programming budgets at the same time as losing audiences to the new channels with their blocks of popular animations targeted at children: 'Something had to happen if we wanted to continue with our dedicated work for children.'



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The public mood was sympathetic, against a background of anxiety about the perceived violence of *Power Rangers* and the impact of advertising slots directed at children, and the government was looking for new ideas. So it was agreed that a dedicated children's channel should be launched, financed out of the licence fee at a cost of just over three Deutschmarks per household. A year later, the channel has overtaken Nickelodeon in terms of market share to take second position, with a diet of quality and largely home-produced shows.

> ***'Commercial and culturally specific should mean the same thing.'***

With nearly 5,000 hours to fill, funding is tight, despite the fact that much programming is shared with both ARD and ZDF. In addition to lobbying government for an increase in the icence fee, Muller explained that she is looking at both other public subsidies and at commercial partners with the idea of reinvesting any revenue in future programming. She also felt that there was more scope for co-operation between public broadcasters around the world: 'We have to give up the feeling, I can only achieve the best if I do the programme myself.'

The concern of **Ron Saunders**, Executive Producer for Southern Star Pacific in Australia, was to ensure a place for high-quality local content in a country which he described as 'totally vulnerable' to American and UK programming. Indeed, regulatory requirements on all channels, plus government subsidies, have helped the situation. But for independent producers it is still a struggle to find sufficient funding. He explained that independent producers could usually get half a programme budget from the home market through pre-sale to the broadcasters, topped up with public subsidies. In his case the rest had been increasingly found through co-productions with a wide range of countries.

His first example, made for the commercial broadcaster Channel 9, was a 26-part drama series called *Spellbinder*, made in partnership with Polish Television and the Shanghai Film Studios owned by Shanghai Television Station. The second was a pre-school programme made with CCTV in China and ABC in Australia, again something which none of the individual organisations could have achieved single-handedly. Totally appropriate culturally in each of the home countries, these shows have also sold well in foreign markets: 'Because we worked so hard at co-operating together, the shows travel very well internationally.'

The final speaker, **Rod Henwood**, Managing Director of Fox Kids in the UK, identified the key dilemma as being how to reconcile the increased resources in terms of new services with fragmentation and increased competition. Declaring himself an optimist, he put a positive gloss on what could seem like a battle between the moral high ground of terrestrial public service and the evil of pay commercial television. In his view, the argument was five-fold. Firstly, new services could add to diversity. Tending to broadcast for longer to niche audiences, they need to develop a distinct, coherent image through their programming, responding creatively to their viewers, as in the cases of MTV, CNN and Sky Sports. Secondly, this encourages production rather than stifling it, because the new channels need to differentiate themselves from their competitors by creating output for a local audience.

Thirdly, said Henwood, 'commercial and culturally specific should mean the same thing.' In order for Fox Kids to achieve its commercial goal of being the favourite children's channel in every country for which it provides a service, it has to 'talk to children in each country in their language using their cultural reference points'. Fourthly, he felt that the so-called fight between animation and live-action programmes was missing the point: 'What matters is whether a service wants to be new, varied and different or whether it is content to be wall-to-wall anything or default viewing.'

Finally, Henwood felt there should be no question about who was to pay. Quite simply, those that stood to profit from the programmes, whether broadcaster or distributor, should foot the bill. Admittedly the sources of finance were more fragmented, but what often stopped him commissioning new local programmes was the 'unwillingness of old services to recognise the inevitable and share rights in those programmes.' Whereas producers, distributors and merchandisers had found ingenious ways to sustain their businesses, those commissioning programmes had to learn to work together.

Opened to the floor, the debate ranged through the idea of original programming quotas for new services to the pros and cons of merchandising and the importance of culturally-specific research. Co-production and the sharing of 'windows', both between established broadcasters and with newcomers or specialist channels, each with their different priorities, were the focus of much attention. The benefits of increased exposure on different channels had to be balanced with a decrease in fees paid by distributors for what was no longer an exclusive product. In summary, the chair felt able to conclude with a message of hope, that 'by thinking a little differently, we can come up with the money.'



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# the new gatekeepers

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| **CHAIR** | Raymond Snoddy Journalist, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Adam Singer Flextech, UK<br>Jean MacCurdy Warner Bros TV Animation, USA<br>David Docherty BBC, UK<br>Patricia Arriaga Channel 11, Mexico<br>Ali Jaber Future Television, Lebanon<br>Peter Orton HIT Entertainment Plc, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Scott Ross Granada Television, UK |

A cartoon clip of Yakko Warner singing about all the countries of the world on his animated map set the scene. After this reminder that today's children's television market is truly international, **Raymond Snoddy**, Media Editor of *The Times* in the UK, introduced 'vertical integration' as the buzzwords of the session. Can the media conglomerates, who not only make programmes, but manage and schedule channels and then deliver them by terrestrial, cable and satellite, be relied upon to play fair? Does their domination reduce everyone else to bit players? And do children stand to lose or gain from the these powerful new hands that hold the keys to the gate?

First to address the issue was **Adam Singer**, Chairman of Flextech in the UK, with such bold assertions as 'Television is first and foremost an economic activity before it's a creative activity' and 'digital television actually means that it all becomes a subset of the Web.' Comparing the current 'arena of transition and chaos' to the impact of Gutenberg's printing press, he pointed to spectrum scarcity as the basis of current broadcasting economics about to be overturned by the digital era. This would move the industry from one that 'can only be entered with a licensed approval of a government' to one that 'is virtually free of government entry requirements'. The fragmented audience would mean a requirement for another revenue stream, however, in the form of subscription revenue. Whereas commercial public broadcasters had managed to survive under the old system, only the future of true public service broadcasters like the BBC could be ensured, as long as the public realised that it was a case of 'use them or lose them'. In Singer's view, with television 'a subset of the information delivery industry and regulation issues solely economic', it would become a case of 'On what terms can I get my children's service carried on your quasi monopolistic distribution network?' His final provocative thought was that plurality and diversity could only survive in a digital world if ownership of content and distribution were to be separated.

As both producer and programmer, **Jean MacCurdy**, President of Warner Bros TV Animation in the USA, wondered whether she might be a perfectly vertically integrated person. Her job is to create new 'copyrights' with programmes such as Animaniacs and Yakko Warner singing *The Nations of the World* as well as exploiting existing ones such as *Batman*, *Superman* and other heroes. This material can then be used for Kids WB! in schedules created by MacCurdy herself or for the Cartoon Network which goes out on cable and satellite both domestically and globally. She programmes 19 hours of children's programmes a week on Kids WB!, three hours on weekdays and four hours on Saturday morning, 80 per cent of which is produced by Warner Bros Animation, the rest acquired from outside.

> *'Being a global company isn't just selling your product around the world, it's involving the creativity of the world in your product.'*

Next to speak, **David Docherty**, Deputy Director of Television for BBC Broadcast in the UK, felt able to turn Singer's comment on its head to say that television was about creativity and not about business because of, in the BBC's case, its unique funding mechanism. The BBC used to be an old-fashioned vertically integrated broadcaster, he explained, but now it was a new-fangled horizontally integrated broadcaster. No longer owner of a transmission system, it still has the studios, the production and broadcasting divisions but, crucially, it doesn't have a way of talking to consumers direct, in other words a subscription management system.

Docherty felt that its involvement in four main aspects, as broadcaster, producer, distributor and publisher, nevertheless gives the BBC the ability to take risks, to show a commitment to diversity and creativity, and to train and develop talent. More controversially, it also allows the BBC to retain programme rights and therefore make a return on its investment and create value for the licence payer. 'We must insist that government keeps its focus on regulating the market to allow us to continue to produce public service children's programmes and not be dominated by economics,' he concluded.



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**Patricia Arriaga**, Director of Children's Programmes for Channel 11 of Mexico Public Television, explained that both commercial and public television had survived in her country because they had been vertically integrated operations for the last 40 years. The regulatory environment allows public television to be available through terrestrial, satellite and cable delivery. However, the country has little tradition of children's television, with only 12 per cent of free television hours being devoted to children. Six per cent of this is home produced, of which Channel 11 produces half and gains only five per cent of the audience. With a mandate to provide children's programming, she predicted that increasing foreign competition within Mexico would force them to focus even more on domestic programming and thus have even less possibility of selling on the international market. She was not in favour of quotas, however, preferring to draw on the lessons of good material from the USA and elsewhere and thus improve the standard of local productions: 'There's a lot to learn if we want to get into the ball game.'

In contrast, **Ali Jaber**, Executive Director of Future Television in the Lebanon, regarded his company as a victim of the vertically integrated environment. He explained that television was still a very young industry, having only really started in the Lebanon in the early 1990s. His own organisation, which broadcasts throughout the Arab world, provides around three hours of children's programming each day, 30 per cent of which is locally produced and the rest acquired from vertically integrated companies such as Disney and Warner Bros. Although his own preference was for programmes that are culturally consistent and sensitive to local demands, he felt that these could co-exist with glossier productions from the American giants. To him, the future lay in co-producing with such organisations for an Arab audience, an approach which had already proved successful in working with Disney: 'The quality is provided by the big people and the small boys like us can attend to the content.'

The final speaker, **Peter Orton**, Managing Director of HIT Entertainment in the UK, was well on the way to vertically integrated status. Despite not having his own channel, he instead has a dedicated television distribution system selling directly to broadcasters in over 100 countries worldwide. This allows him to pre-sell programming and put together co-productions which in turn funds new shows. His company also has a video cassette division in order to capitalise on his productions and is in the process of setting up a licensing and merchandising division. His most recent venture is an animation studio for his own productions. 'Although we're a small company,' he said, 'I think it's important that we recognise that vertical integration is an absolute essential part of moving forward.'

*'The quality is provided by the big people and the small boys like us can attend to the content.'*

As the discussion continued, it became clear that the relationship between a small overseas television station and a massive international company on which it is dependent for a large proportion of its programming can be uncomfortable. Panellists and contributors from the floor agreed that there was an obligation on the large conglomerates to commit themselves to producing indigenous programming where they broadcast around the world, something which MacCurdy of Warner Bros felt made business sense: 'Being a global company isn't just selling your product around the world, it's involving the creativity of the world in your product.' Orton felt that the move towards more international involvement was already happening because of the need to fund shows through pre-selling more widely to countries worldwide. A round of clips provoked more debate but also demonstrated the diversity and quality possible from the vertically integrated giants operating on a world stage.

***'There's no need to panic, we were told. These new companies will continue to provide diversity and quality. I'm not sure all the people at the session shared the same optimism.'***

**Michael Lavoie** agent provocateur



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# the co-production cabaret

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| **CHAIR** | Gillian Reynolds broadcaster and writer, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Charles Brown AMX Digital, UK |
| | Geraldine Easter Filmworks, UK |
| | Gavin James United Film and Television Productions, UK |
| **PANELLISTS** | Neil Court Decode Entertainment, UK |
| | Paul Kofod Egmont Imagination, Denmark |
| | Theresa Dillon KidScreen Magazine, Canada |
| | Emmanuele Petry Nelvana, Canada |
| **PRODUCERS** | Mikael Shields and Lucy Ellson EVA Entertainment, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | KidScreen |

Chair **Gillian Reynolds**, broadcaster and writer, described the session as a practical introduction to the world of co-production, in which the audience would be offered a case study and a wealth of expertise. She turned first to **Charles Brown**, media consultant with AMX Digital in the UK, for an overview of co-production in relation to children's television.

Brown identified three main reasons for embarking upon co-production: financial necessity, a way of enabling the production of high-budget projects and opening up commercial opportunity and, not least, the benefits of drawing upon a broader range of ideas and cultures. Public service broadcasters, in particular, have been affected by a decline in budgets during the last decade, many facing competition for the first time. Overall, though, there had been pressure to find new funding sources, with both drama and factual programming suffering most.

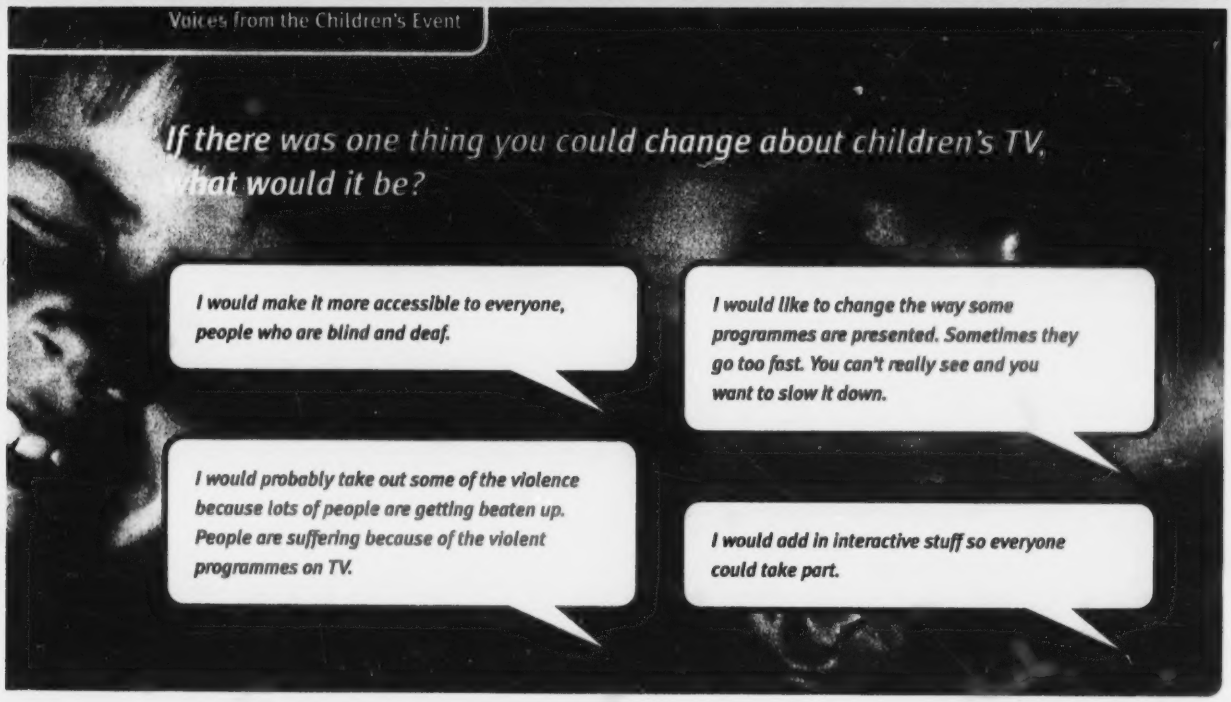
With public broadcasters still taking the leading role in original programming and producing over 20 per cent more than private networks, it is this group who are the most active co-producers, explained Brown. Although specialist channels carry over six times as much children's programming, up to 80 per cent, or in some cases 90 or 95 per cent, is acquired. Private networks acquire around 65 per cent and rely heavily on animation.

Brown pointed to what he saw as a stratification of funding approaches. While large organisations such as the BBC were pursuing formal partnerships around the world, smaller broadcasters and independents were being forced to adopt 'mosaic funding' approaches. Of concern was the danger that public broadcasters would continue to be squeezed, leading to less diversity. He could envisage that national interests and commercial concerns would increasingly be in conflict and that cultural priorities would need to be protected. New international consortia would emerge, among them representatives of developing nations and also of independents locked out of relationships with the larger distributors.

To illustrate some of these points, **Geraldine Easter**, Managing Director of the UK independent production company Filmworks, then outlined her experience of funding and producing the 13 half-hour series *Captain Starr*. An animated sitcom set in space, this began life as a comic strip created by Steven Appleby in the late 1980s. As Easter explained, it took eight years to raise the production funding and another year to make before it reached ITV's schedules in 1997. This financing process began in earnest through an EC initiative, but only one broadcaster, Canal + Spain, managed to stay on board until the end. The project was not accepted by a 'home' broadcaster until HTV supported it in 1993, at which stage the only funding received had been a 50 per cent EC grant towards the pilot. The ITV network made no commitment until 1995, less than 18 months before it wanted the series ready for transmission. By 1996, all eight partners – Alliance Communications of Canada, Nickelodeon, HTV, ZDF, Canal + Spain, YLE from Finland, VPRO from Holland and Filmworks – had come together, but the financial and legal negotiations had only just begun. Compared to this, the production was, in her words, 'frankly a piece of cake' because of everyone's willingness to make the project work.

Among Easter's recommendations would be that no co-production should have more than three partners because of the complex legal and financial structures and associated costs. Ideally, there should be someone prepared to put up development money and a broadcaster prepared to back enough episodes to establish a series with the audience. Above all, however, the project had required persistence and an unshakeable belief in its potential.

This final sentiment was echoed by **Gavin James**, Head of Commercial Affairs at United Film and Television Productions in the UK, previously with Harvest Entertainment at HTV which had been involved with *Captain Starr* from the early days. He admitted that co-productions had their pitfalls and stressed the importance of achieving the right mix of partners – only one


If there was one thing you could change about children's TV, what would it be?
I would make it more accessible to everyone, people who are blind and deaf.
I would like to change the way some programmes are presented. Sometimes they go too fast. You can't really see and you want to slow it down.
I would probably take out some of the violence because lots of people are getting beaten up. People are suffering because of the violent programmes on TV.
I would add in interactive stuff so everyone could take part.

distributor, one production unit and ideally the support of a major broadcaster. Commitment was paramount, however, regardless of the necessary negotiation: 'We didn't fall out, because we were partners on a project.'

First to contribute from the panel was **Neil Court**, a partner in the UK for Decode Entertainment. His key prediction was that since the trend was towards a mix of funding for so many programmes, co-production would cease to be so special and simply become known as production financing. He anticipated a structural shift towards two main kinds of players in the children's television market – the mainly US-based vertically integrated global operations and the large or medium-sized independent producers. In his view, the latter were already being defined less by their country of origin than by what they produced. Similarly, in an age of fragmentation, such companies were increasingly likely to group together according to language rights rather than broadcast rights. As far as skills were concerned, he felt it vital for potential partners to be acutely aware of the broadcaster's needs: 'You have to do your research, know what they're looking for and try to find something that fits.'

A self-confessed optimist, **Paul Kofod**, Managing Director of Egmont Imagination in Denmark, explained that co-production was unavoidable for producers operating from any of the Nordic countries. He put his faith in talent and high production quality in the belief that the child audience was discerning. He also felt that children appreciated the opportunity to perpetuate the fantasy provided by television away from the screen and that broadcasters should be prepared to back their projects with the relevant publishing and quality merchandise.

**Theresa Dillon**, Editor of *KidScreen Magazine* in Canada, also spoke with first-hand experience of a country involved in co-producing out of sheer necessity. In addition to having to compete against both domestic rivals and the world's greatest entertainment provider, the USA, Canada has also had to cope with fragmenting audiences longer than most because of its almost universal cable penetration. Although she predicts that the big American studios will continue to be the dominant players, the co-production option exercised by so many other players makes it possible to compete.

Finally, **Emmanuele Petry**, from the Paris office of the Canadian production company Nelvana, spoke warmly of the willingness of French companies to co-produce for Canada as opposed to her perception of British caution in this area. Currently working on nine different series, she spoke of the 'magic moment' when you have convinced a broadcaster of the merit of a project. She reported that the trend was towards 50-50 funding with a French partner rather than Canada always being the minority partner. In addition, government subsidy was available for thematic channels to enter into such deals. From her own experience, she did not agree that this approach was merely 'co-financing' as suggested by Court, especially when the production work was a shared process.

Discussion ranged widely from merchandising and the difficulty of creating a clear brand character when there were so many international partners involved (**Andrew Macbean**, Chief Executive of ITEL in the UK) to a plug for the South-East Asian Foundation for Children's Television in the Philippines from **Sarah Lowther**, eager for co-production opportunities for the seven countries she represents.

> ***'It was said that co-productions can be a nightmare. But let's face it, they're unavoidable.'***
>
> **Michael Lavoie** agent provocateur



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# the world's our stage – an animated co-production to beat all others

In 1997, **Chris Grace**, Director of Animation at S4C in Wales, proposed that, under the auspices of the World Summit, a 26-country co-production should be launched to animate 26 of the world's greatest stories for children, to the very highest standards of design and technique. The series should be non-profit making, with net revenue being held by and distributed by a World Summit Foundatic This session was designed as a progress report on the project and a chance to hear from some of the participants.

***'The ideal behind the Tales is inclusivity.'***

**Chris Grace**

Chris Grace began by outlining the aims of the co-production. '*The Animated Tales of the World* are a very, very small fight back against the globalisation of television culture. Underpinning the tales is a fear of a loss of cultural memory, a fear echoed in countries that I travel to, particularly the developing countries, and in many of the sessions that I've been attending this week. I sense a deep resentment amongst developing countries of cultural colonisation by media. They don't have the privilege to worry about cultural dumbing down. They are increasingly the victims of cultural dumping.

The ideal behind the *Tales* is therefore inclusivity, that we bring 26 countries together to share between them, and others who buy the series, their cultural heritage as expressed in the past through oral story-telling. Each country will contribute one film and will then broadcast the other 25. Of the 26 countries that we need, 20 are in. On a budget of £5.2 million, we are £800,000 light. We need the industrialised countries, Spain, Germany, Italy, the Scandinavian block and Japan.

The bonus of this is that if the 26 countries cashflow this series over three years, the advances from the distributors, from television, from video, from publishing, from music publishing, will come to somewhere around £200,000 and that money will go to the Summit to be held in trust and used to further the aims and initiatives that come out of this week.

Now, this all began on a beach in West Wales in June of last year when I wondered if there was a way that we could create a co-production under the auspices of the World Summit with this week being the focus and the vehicle for carrying a 26-part £5.2 million co-production forward. The idea would be that each country would act as a producer, with each broadcaster appointing an executive producer. Under that executive producer there would be a writer, a composer and a researcher. If possible we would try and do the pre- and the post-production in that country but that's not always possible. The animation would depend on the style of the tale, the technique that was required and would be apposite to that story. This would all be co-ordinated at a world-class standard by S4C and the Right Angle team in Wales. Each film would take two years and would be different. Central to this is the indigenous integrity of each film, so the writing would be indigenous, the design, the voice track, the research and the music.

Now, as I saw it this had an ethos that was consistent with the Children's Charter's values and the World Summit remit. It addressed the concern of cultural erosion; it was inclusive in spirit in bringing the developing and the industrialised countries together as equal co-production partners; it had high production values; and it was twice the amount of money that is usually spent on animation. Each country is guaranteed exposure of their work on 25 other channels. It is a way of training and developing people. And over the three years I estimate over 2,000 people will be employed in one way or another.

The idea is that one finances the series on a sliding scale. The industrialised countries will pay the most and the developing countries the least, each frankly having to pay more than they would for acquired, less than they would for a commissioned series.

A pack in three languages went out to 104 countries in October of last year and the response was good without being excessive. I visited six of those countries in February – South Africa, Pakistan, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the USA – and all came in. Twenty countries are now involved, attracted by what S4C has done in the past on projects such as *Shakespeare, the Animated Tales*. That series with the BBC went on to win three primetime Emmys, it sold to 50 countries and it's used by 80 per cent of the secondary schools in the UK. We then went of to work with the Welsh National Opera in doing a series of six operas in half-hour adaptations, *The Barber of Seville* and so on. We then did a series called *Testament: the Bible in Animation*. With Channel 4 we've just completed a series called *Animated World Faiths*. We're also working on literary epics like *The Canterbury Tales, Don Quixote* and *Moby Dick* and a feature film on the life of Jesus for the millennium.'



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At this point, Grace introduced representatives from some of the 20 countries which had already agreed to participate:

**Michael O'Malley** Tna G, Ireland
'This project is important to us because it's a chance to do a story in our own language and to introduce the children of Ireland to other languages and other stories from around the world.'

**Barbara Masel** SBS (Special Broadcasting Service), Australia
'*The Animated Tales* is able to deliver on all the counts laid out in the charter for our service.'

**Signe Zeilich-Jensen** KRO, The Netherlands
'I think it's something we should do in order to challenge the viewer.'

**Soo Siew Lee** ToS, Singapore
'We're thinking of this story based in a little Malay fishing village in the 18th century which is attacked by a sword fish. The king, who is very pompous, tries many ways to counter the attack until finally a little boy comes out with a solution. I think the message is we should listen to our children a little bit more.'

**Carole Rosen** Home Box Office, USA
'We've had the great fortune of working with Chris and S4C on many other projects, and we're thrilled to be able to move on.'

**Thuli Nene** SABC Education, South Africa
'I see this opportunity as a healing process for our people where they have absence of ownership.'

**John Richmond** Channel 4, UK
'I've learnt an enormous amount about animation from *World Faiths* and I'm deep in admiration for what the best animators are able to do.'

**Michela Giorelli** Discovery Kids, Latin America
'We're pan-regional in Latin America, going to 35 countries – Mexico, the Caribbean, through South America. We're delighted to be associated with this unique coproduction.'

**Adrian Mills** CBC with tfo, Canada
'It's the opportunity to focus on telling a good story and get some texture on to the schedule that really appealed to me.'

**Moneeza Hashmi** Pakistan Tv Corporation
'One of my three dreams as a broadcaster has been to take my country out to the world and to show them the rich traditions and the culture that we have.'

Grace explained that the series was designed for children between seven and 11 but with family appeal as well. This was reflected in the proposed scheduling by many countries for a weekend evening around 7pm instead of at a time more targeted at children. The aim was to complete 13 films by 2000 and the remainder by 2001. Because each country would be purchasing unlimited runs over seven years, several saw this as an opportunity to broadcast them in a variety of different languages appropriate to their region.

Grace then introduced **Penelope Middelboe**, Script and Series Editor from Right Angle in Wales, who has worked on all the S4C animation projects. She explained that she would be working on *The Animated Tales*, helping to find the appropriate design, style and technique for each story: 'There are many, many different styles of animation and we're very keen to explore anything that comes up, anything new.' To illustrate the point, she showed three extracts using, in her words, 'painstakingly difficult' systems: the first using cels and requiring hand shadowing of the images with crayons, the second using oil on glass, and third using salt. Despite the attraction of using different techniques, however, she knew that 'keeping the audience in mind is the most important thing and serving the story has to come before the art form.'

The session continued with a discussion between Middelboe and participants from Canada and Pakistan about the stories they would be using. Questions followed, including further expressions of interest in the project from Arab Radio and Television, Tunisia, Slovak Television and Ghana. Grace talked about other aspects needing attention such as the promotion, linking sequences and distribution and publishing potential, before turning for a final word to Anna Home, Chair of the Second World Summit. Encouraged by the response to what she called a 'wonderful venture' which could be the beginning of something much larger, she felt sure that, with his track record, Grace would be able to turn an ambitious project into reality.

> ***'This is a very ambitious and exciting project, and it doesn't hurt to have a guy like Chris Grace leading it.'***
>
> **Michael Lavoie** agent provocateur



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**UPDATE**

According to news from Right Angle, excellent progress has been made since the Summit. Work is going ahead for two series of 13 tales contributed by 26 broadcasters. Satellite footprints in Latin America (35 countries) and the Gulf States (22 countries), plus the countries involved in the project, mean that 80 countries will see the series in 27 languages.

The first series, for transmission in 2000, comprises tales from the following countries:

Burkino Faso
*The Tyrant and the Child*
to be animated in Prague for Television Nationale de Burkina

England
*Cap O'Rushes*
to be animated in Moscow for Channel 4

France
*Ewenn Congar*
to be animated in France for La Cinq

The Gulf
*The Crown*
to be animated in Moscow for Arab Radio & Television

Ireland
*How Fionn Became the Leader of the Fianna*
to be animated in Ireland for Tna G and RTE

Latin America
*The Chief and the Carpenter*
to be animated in Uruguay for Discovery

The Netherlands
*The Tree with the Golden Apples*
to be animated in Moscow for KRO

Pakistan
*The Two Little Birds*
to be animated in Moscow for Pakistan TV Corporation

Taiwan
*Aunt Tiger*
to be animated in Cardiff for PTS

USA
*John Henry*
to be animated in Hungary for HBO

Already completed are tales from:
Alaska
*Raven Steals the Daylight*
China
*The Magic Paintbrush*
Russia
*The Two Brothers*
Wales
*King March*

Progress on the second series, for transmission in 2001, is as follows:

Australia
*Bad Bab / Amy*
to be animated in Australia for SBS Independent

Canada
*How the Narwhal got its Tusk*
to be animated in Canada for CBC Television and tfo

Nauru
*Eigigu, the Woman in the Moon to be*
animated in Moscow for Nauru Television

Poland
*The Lucky Fern*
to be animated in Poland for Polish Television

Norway
*Three Sisters who fell into a Mountain*
to be animated in Prague for NRK

Scotland
BBC Scotland and Gaelic Broadcasting Committee researching suitable tales

Singapore
research into possible stories by ToS

South Africa
*The Tortoise and the Ogre*
for SABC Education

Potential involvement is also being discussed with Spain, Germany, Costa Rica, Italy and Brazil

Writing in a recent newsletter to participants, the team at Right Angle in Wales concluded: 'We will do everything in our power to ensure that you, as broadcasters, will each have your own unique film that will represent your culture in the way you intended.'

*King March*: one of the tales which is already complete



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# show me the money! funding organisations and children's television

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAIR | Christian Davin Alphanim, France |
| SPEAKERS | Sheila de la Varande Telefilm Canada Europe |
| | Joaquim Falcao Roberto Marinho Foundation, Brazil |
| | William Hetzer UNICEF |
| PRODUCERS | Corinne Jenart CARTOON, Belgium |
| | Europe Singh BBC, in association with Charles Brown AMX Digital UK |

Opening the session, chair **Christian Davin**, Chairman of Alphanim in France, explained that the focus was not on mainstream programme financing but on money stemming from other sources such as government subsidy, non-governmental organisations and private foundations. All four panellists would therefore reflect some common aims, namely to support children's identity and integrity from a cultural and social standpoint and to develop new opportunities for children to counterbalance what some might perceive as the harmful globalisation of the television industry.

Her first speaker, **Sheila de la Varande**, Director of the European office of Telefilm Canada, began by outlining the current state of the Canadian film and television industry and her organisation's role within it. Now worth in excess of Can$2.8 billion annually, the production sector has grown by 70 per cent in the past five years in order to meet demand from both the English-language market (serving a population of 23 million) and the French (7 million). As she pointed out, this could not have happened without domestic financing such as that provided by Telefilm Canada. Since its inception as a governmental organisation 30 years ago, it has invested over Can$1 billion in Canadian film and television, and this year is due to fund around one fifth of production. Children's programming for a plethora of public networks, private stations and specialist and pay services is largely produced by a small number of independent producers, who are increasingly becoming involved in international co-productions, especially with France. Operating in a regulatory environment which, since 1991, has required specific amounts of Canadian content depending upon the type of service, producers look for funding not only from Telefilm but other sources.

Telefilm invested Can$11 million in children's programmes last year which, together with another Can$29 million from the Canadian Television and Cable Production Licence Fee Fund Programme, generated over 700 hours of children's television. Other possible sources include private funds, in some cases initiated by the broadcasters, and lobbying groups committed to media literacy, non-violent content and the promotion of children's programming in general. In de la Varande's view, regulation and finance of this kind work hand-in-hand to ensure that Canadian children are provided with high-quality programming. 'Canadian broadcasters and producers have learned to turn regulatory conditions and revenue challenges into opportunities,' she said.

In contrast, **Joaquim Falcao**, Executive Director of the Roberto Marinho Foundation in Brazil, described how he had to 'invent money' from three main sources: cash from TV Globo, Brazil's largest media group; sponsors for specific projects; and, thirdly, free time and space for promotion on television and in the press. According to the mission of the foundation – to use media in favour of education, the environment and national 'landmarks' – these resources are then used to support not just a television programme but a larger project encompassing educational material and activities, community involvement and all associated aspects of communication.

Falcao described two ventures, the first an educational project covering eight Brazilian states sponsored by Citibank, whose two main goals were to help train teachers to use television in classrooms and to address issues about the children's health. In other words, the televisual content, a series of ten programmes, was only a part of the whole, although free advertising on television and in the press provided by TV Globo was fundamental to its success. His second example was the new private educational channel called Futura, launched with 14 national and international partners and soon to be reaching 17 million people. Here again, the emphasis is on multi-faceted projects rather than simply television programmes.

Next to speak was **William Hetzer**, Chief of the Radio, Film and TV Section of UNICEF, who outlined several ways in which he felt it was possible for an organisation such as UNICEF to work with the broadcasting industry to transmit its message about human rights. Firstly, through partnerships, they had been able to develop two animated series highlighting issues of cultural

identity, one about Meena, a South Asian girl, and the other about Sarah, an African girl. With their positive approach to problems of discrimination, the main characters act as role models for those tackling similar situations. In the case of the Asian series, UNICEF was helped by Hanna Barbera Studios and by facilities and animation artists in India where most of the 13 programmes were made. The Norwegian government had committed over US$6 million for both series and other funding had come from governments in the Asian region as well as non-governmental organisations. After a successful launch in South Asia, the series is now being translated into French and Spanish.

Turning to UNICEF's advocacy for health, education and social issues, which also involves broadcasters, Hetzer announced a new competition for members of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association to produce an appropriate script for this year's International Children's Day of Broadcasting on 13 December which could then be used by broadcasters during 1999. This day involves broadcasters worldwide (2,000 in 130 countries in 1997), sharing information and views about and from children.

Hetzer then reminded delegates about the series of cartoons on human rights already mentioned by Mary Robinson, which had been produced for UNICEF by a consortium of the world's leading animation houses including Disney, Warner Bros, Feature Animation, BRB International, MTV, RAI, CINAR, YLE and Gaumont. Relying on visual rather than verbal language, 30 of these made-for-TV 'spots' are already available free to broadcasters worldwide, with more in the offing. Finally, Hetzer reported that UNICEF was seeking co-production partners for a new animated series called *Digit and Download*, which would take a look at the real-life experiences of children using amusing, action-oriented stories. Past experience had shown that through such projects, undertaken in conjunction with producers and broadcasters, it was possible to raise funds and provide programming of benefit to children everywhere.

The final speaker was **Corinne Jenart**, Executive Manager of CARTOON, part of the European Union's Media Programme, based in Belgium. Launched in 1988, this set up an action plan for European animation in conjunction with representatives of the industry. In addition to holding a database of over 7,000 people involved across Europe and distributing an annual catalogue of animation production, CARTOON has money to allocate in the form of either loans or subsidies. Loans are provided for all aspects of development and pre-production, with 25 per cent having to be reimbursed 12 months later and the remainder when and if the production goes ahead. Subsidies are available for studios working together an for professional training. CARTOON also holds an annual co-production forum each year in September at which producers with new projects can meet with potential co-producers and partners from across Europe.

There were questions for all four speakers about how producers could access funding and the eligibility criteria involved. UNICEF came in for some criticism, the latter particularly from India where **Sunil Doshi**, Chief Executive of Alliance Media and Entertainment, explained that there had been difficulties in eliciting any response from local officers regarding creative proposals. Hetzer took up the point, undertaking to look into such complaints. There was also praise for its work from Namibia, Brazil and **Tania Nasielski** from Atelier Graphoui in Belgium who talked about successful partnerships with UNICEF in both Benin and Burundi.

> ***This practical information will be useful to producers seeking to complete their financial structures.***
>
> **Michael Lavoie** agent provocateur



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# white knight or dragon? the role of advertising in children's programming

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Glen Smith Children's Research Unit, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Henri Pagot Swedish Advertising Agencies Association |
| | Philip Mitchell-Taverner Taverner Research Company, Australia |
| | Tess Alps Drum PHD, UK |
| **PRODUCERS** | Nicci Crowther PAGODA, UK |
| | Richard Morss United Film and Television Productions, UK |

How many commercial messages does a child in the UK see between the time he or she wakes up in the morning, gets dressed, has breakfast and leaves for school?

This was the question posed to the audience at the start of a lively debate on advertising to children, chaired by **Glen Smith**, Chairman of the Children's Research Unit in the UK. Just as advertising is integral to commercial television, he said, it is also integral to the commercial environment in which today's children live. And yet views differed widely on the degree of protection that should be given to them. However fast they are developing in a higher paced life, they are still children.

First to speak was **Henri Pagot**, Assistant Managing Director of the Swedish Advertising Agencies Association to explain why Sweden had passed legislation to ban advertising to children under the age of 12. The move has understandably led to significant conflict within the industry in Sweden, with strong criticism from bodies such as the TV Institute of Sweden, owned by the commercial television channels, which has recently funded publication of a book claiming that commercials are not harmful to children.

Despite clear support from the public, with 90 per cent against commercials aimed at children, the Advertising Association would actually prefer rather clearer legislation and better guidelines for agencies and advertisers, ultimately leading to self-regulation. Pagot reported that the toy industry also claimed that it wants self-regulation but has made no attempt to move this forward. Instead, they have circumvented the law by transmitting commercials on TV3 and TV5, both broadcast from the UK but aimed at Swedish children. 'We have chosen another road – of constructive discussion and change through mutual interests,' explained Pagot. 'We are now looking at different alternatives to build and finance a solution that leads to less legislation and more self-regulation.'

As Managing Director of the Australian company Taverner Research, **Philip Mitchell-Taverner** wanted to put forward a perspective from a country whose television advertising is regulated by strict codes of practice for both terrestrial and cable and satellite television: 'In fact there are more controls nowadays over TV advertising content than there are over TV programme content.'

In Mitchell-Taverner's view, public pressures made it virtually impossible consistently and successfully to offend socially accepted behaviour on the television screen. At the same time, he said, 'society accepts that advertising is part of our social fabric and kids are significant purchasers. Total banning of advertising is simply not necessary.' Quite sanguine about children's ability to distinguish between commercial messages and programmes and to discern the persuasive intent of advertisements, Mitchell-Taverner felt that children were certainly no more impressionable than adults and probably smarter than many people gave them credit for when it came to discriminating between good and bad behaviour. Kids were far more affected by their peer relationships and the family than they ever could be by television commercials. Indeed, the somewhat limited extent to which advertisers could promote during traditional children's programme times gave children some early exposure to real world experience and, not least, some fun. With responsible controls in place, he felt it was possible to promote safely to kids on television so 'let's make the advertisements and the programmes more interesting.'

> *'Total banning of advertising is simply not necessary.'*

Response from the audience ranged from incredulity that advertising could possibly be considered a 'real world experience' when it was quite obviously commercial exploitation (**Lorraine Heggessey**, Head of Children's Programmes at the BBC)



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and fears that commercial messages 'ooze into everything that is television production' (a producer from South Africa), to the point that, according to new research, television did not necessarily increase 'pester power' on the part of children (Glen Smith).

More clips were shown followed by a break for the audience to divide into groups to rate the effectiveness of these commercials for children. Of the seven advertisements – for Sony PlayStation, Clever Dad MacDonald's, Smarties, Walker's Crisps, Bandai Power Rangers, Nike and Lego – those for PlayStation and Smarties scored highest.

The second half of the session consisted of the presentation of a 'big idea' by **Tess Alps**, Executive Chairman of Drum PHD in the UK.

In her own words, an 'extremely elderly mother', she wanted to keep diversity in British children's programming that allowed for everything from *Blue Peter* to *Children's Ward*. She was aware, though, that 'the programmes I most value as a parent are the ones that are least able to amortise their production costs from worldwide sales, video sales, licensing and merchandising deals, and therefore inevitably are most at risk.'

In no way wanting to attack advertising or sponsorship – 'without it, something like £90 million a year would be lost from children's production'– she could also see the temptation for a channel such as ITV to earn more from the time spent on children's programming by broadcasting something of wider appeal. As for advertising to children, it was just part of a perpetual process of passing on value judgements to the next generation. The important point was to regulate the content and treatment.

Turning to her approach for generating 'new cash' for quality children's projects, Alps proposed the establishment of a fund with the working title ACT (Advertisers for Children's Television) to be created by the television industry but designed to attract commercial sponsors. While they would benefit from high-profile promotion of the ACT brand and logo, their financial contributions would be allotted to worthwhile projects by a committee of eminent figures from children's television. Any advertiser targeting parents should be interested and the fight for quality kids' television could become a proper campaign – cause-related marketing at its best – with money likely to come from advertisers' PR budgets rather than their current advertising budgets. Funding would be for a minimum of 20 per cent of any project and a maximum of 50 per cent, and the projects themselves should be major, destined for transmission on free-to-air channels but not the BBC, since advertisers might well object to their funds being used for a non-commercial channel. Any advertiser currently able to sponsor a children's programme should be eligible, but with only one company from each sector. They would not be able to advertise their own products through the programme but association with the ACT logo, if promoted sufficiently widely, should be reward enough.

***'I've put to you a simple idea that could generate maybe a supplementary £10 million a year in the UK for threatened children's programming.'***

Tantalising her audience with the thought of a possible extra £10 million for children's programming each year, Alps faced the inevitable questions. Wouldn't advertisers want editorial involvement? Wouldn't exclusion of the BBC from the project lead to inevitable jealousies? And wouldn't the commercial broadcasters fight among themselves anyway? A producer from National Geographic, who stated that typically their programmes were not merchandisable, gave Alps the argument she was looking for: 'It's exactly those sort of programmes that the industry will say, 'Well that's a project that we know can't make its money that way, therefore it deserves some of this money.' Convinced that she was launching a cause that was well worth supporting, Alps concluded by asking the audience to complete a questionnaire to provide some initial feedback on the idea.

*PS Children see 226 commercial messages between waking and going to school. A bottle of champagne went to the nearest guess – 300.*

***'We can conclude that children's television is a business. So it must and should be. But we also agree that it should be protected, regulated and balanced in the best interests of children.'***

**Michael Lavoie** agent provocateur



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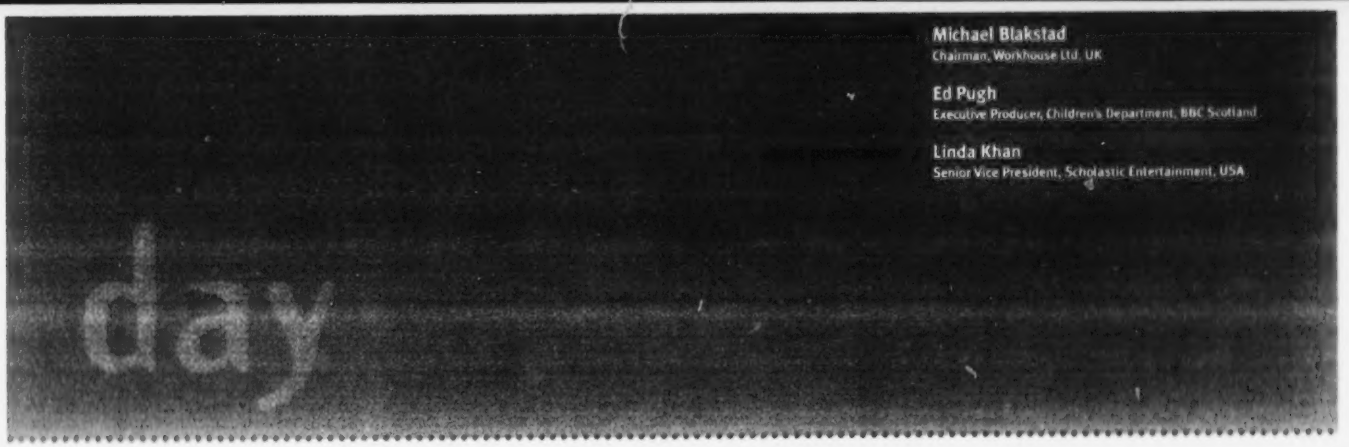


# 4 new media

children's television and the future

**children's new media: access, ownership, excellence**

learning byte by byte

**joining the dots**

flooding the world

**what's happening in the bedroom – young people and new media**

brands or strands – internet programming for children

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# children's television and the future

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAIR | Betty Cohen Cartoon Network, USA |
| SPEAKER | Rt Hon Chris Smith MP UK Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport |
| PRODUCERS | Michael Blakstad Workhouse Ltd, UK |
| | Ed Pugh BBC, UK |
| SPONSORS | Australian Children's Television Foundation |
| | Telstra and Hewlett Packard Australia |

As co-producer of the day, **Michael Blakstad**, Chairman of Workhouse Ltd in the UK, opened proceedings. Himself an example of someone who had moved from television to interactive production, he explained that the day's sessions would explore both the opportunities and threats posed by the new media. **Betty Cohen**, President of Cartoon Network in the USA, then introduced the keynote speaker, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, **Rt Hon Chris Smith MP**, and welcomed evidence of the Government's commitment to three objectives: diversity of provision, genuine choice and quality of content.

### Rt Hon Chris Smith MP

'I haven't yet heard of any child saying "When I grow up I want to be Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport." I think my response to anyone who did might well be "Don't wait, it's a job wasted on a grown-up." By this I mean that to make a success of my job, and this may also apply to some of your jobs too, you need to be both open to and curious about new ideas and new technologies. You need to appreciate and respond to creativity and to have both respect and sometimes a healthy disrespect for experts and institutions. It's not an easy balance for an adult to manage, but children have a reputation, a deserved reputation, for making honest assessments – taking what they can use without fear and leaving what doesn't appeal without regret.

We will need some honest assessments as the new media we're discussing today become more widely available. The landscape of the media and communications industry is becoming frontier territory again and children more than the rest of us are growing up with this country. We need to involve them and be prepared to learn from them. To do this, our first step may well be to re-evaluate our attitudes as producers and regulators to the child audience, to its intelligence, to its honesty and to its needs. In doing so, we must of course always remember not to underestimate children's capacity to interact with broadcasting on an adult basis. As the natural inheritors of new technology, and the catalyst often for its introduction into households, children can drive developments in broadcasting services as viewers, listeners and articulate critics of programming not specifically for them, such as sport, music and soap opera.

Our present system of regulation gives broadcasters a two-fold accountability to children, ensuring that they are protected from unsuitable material and provided with programmes made for them and relevant to their interests. Perhaps, unfortunately, the context in which children's interests are most often discussed is solely the negative one of protecting them from unsuitable material. This term encompasses a multitude of reported sins. Television is blamed for young people's alleged lack of concentration, lack of respect, aggression, truculence, pestering, precociousness and even promiscuity and, to cap it all, we're also told it makes them unhealthy. Given this image, new media services are likely to be as welcome in some family homes as the unsuitable boyfriend or the bad crowd from school.

> *'If we assume that children are simply going to take to new technology because it is new technology we would be very mistaken.'*

Shining through all these concerns – some of them justified, but some of them not – is a sincere ambition I think we all share. It is our desire to let children have a childhood that is a distinct time and space of relative emotional innocence. It's true of course that childhood innocence is more fiercely guarded by adults than it is appreciated by children. There's a hard balance to find here for producers and regulators alike. Some children will have already lost that innocence because of their experiences early in life. If they do not see the world they know reflected on screen, we risk adding to their isolation rather than relieving it. Others will have heard whispered half truths and myths about adult life which may frighten or mislead them and we have a responsibility to complete the picture. Still others will have learned more than they or their parents have ever experienced. If these children suspect an adult conspiracy to deny them knowledge, they are likely to lose respect for the adults and the television involved.

With the proviso that we continue to examine from time to time, via events like this week's conference, our motives in shielding



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children from harmful material, I believe it will continue to be important as new media services develop to protect them from harm, exploitation and fear. There is a consensus among European Union member states that the new audio-visual services need to protect children and other vulnerable groups in society from exposure to potentially damaging material. These new services, including the Internet, are obviously difficult to regulate and differ from traditional broadcasting in that questions of liability and cross-border transmission make it very difficult to impose effective regulation in a direct manner. We're using Britain's presidency of the European Union to seek member states' agreement to a Council recommendation which will encourage effective self-regulation by the industry and the sharing of good practice between those responsible at national level.

We certainly do not want, however, to encourage the impression that new media forms are inherently bad for children. It may be true that by spending time with new media, children reduce the time that they would otherwise give to more traditional learning materials and pastimes. After all, we cannot regulate more hours into the day. But it should not be the case that learning and creative play are therefore lost. They should and do continue and develop through the new services. This is the other half of our regulatory responsibility to children – to provide them with programmes specifically made for and targeted at them, not only as a group but as sub-groups of age ranges, boys and girls, and so on, and to ensure that these programmes inform, educate and entertain them as developing young people, not simply as a niche market.

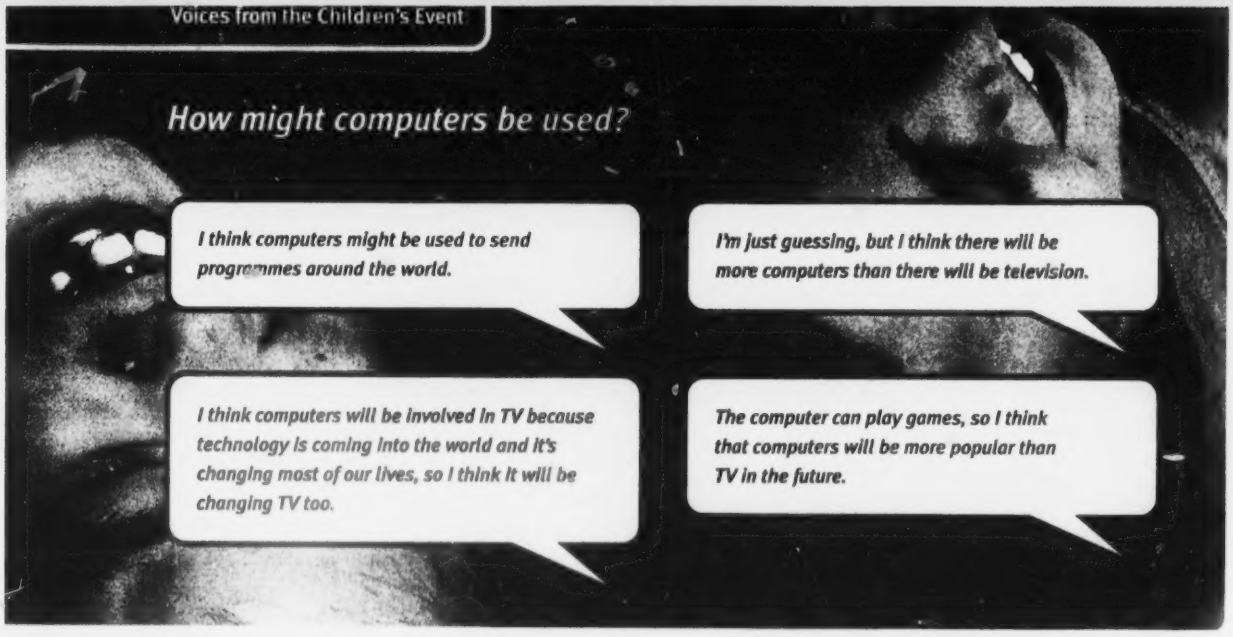
You will rightly have guessed that I would emphasise here the importance of what is generally known as public service broadcasting. The difficulty in using that term is perhaps that it tends to suggest exclusivity, to imply that any programme material not identified as public service broadcasting is somehow without anything other than commercial value. It also carries the complementary and equally unfortunate implication that anything which is public service broadcasting is completely without commercial value. I value very highly, as I have often said, the contribution of those who have traditionally been identified with public service broadcasting

Rt Hon Chris Smith MP

in the UK. I hope, however, it is clear that public service broadcasting need not be confined to the output of particular types of broadcaster. I'm committed to the delivery of public services in broadcasting and I will, like all of you, be looking afresh at what is required of it and how it might best be provided in the multi-channel future. I certainly don't want it to become – either for the broadcasters producing it or for the child consumer – the television equivalent of forcing children to eat their greens.

Children are, of course, particularly good these days at arguing successfully with those who are supposed to know more than them. Adults who rely solely on their experience, their knowledge, or 'because I say so' to enforce their authority, are more likely than ever to get short shrift. Many young people are well informed, articulate and assertive and don't see why they should listen to people whose only advantage over them is time served.

Many people, myself included, have praised broadcasters for their contribution to informing young people about their world. As I said earlier, some have also held broadcasters to blame for children's increasing questioning of authority. Whilst it's not clear whether a share of blame is due to broadcasters, they may certainly find a share of the suffering coming their way if they treat the child audience in a patronising way. I've spoken about the dangers of perceiving children only as consumers for new media services, but it's equally perilous to forget their status as customers.


How might computers be used?
I think computers might be used to send programmes around the world.
I'm just guessing, but I think there will be more computers than there will be television.
I think computers will be involved in TV because technology is coming into the world and it's changing most of our lives, so I think it will be changing TV too.
The computer can play games, so I think that computers will be more popular than TV in the future.

I'm always pleased to note when I hear children's programme-makers talking about their craft, the emphasis they place on involving children in the design, production and presenting of their programmes. The new services which are currently being developed will offer unparalleled opportunities for all viewers, not just a select few, to get in on the act, and we can expect children always to be among the first to grab these openings and register their views. As these services develop, children will be able to call up particular programmes or particular options within programmes, to vote on propositions put to them by the broadcaster, to produce and schedule their own programmes. Boring old viewing will have to be pretty special to compete with such options.

I suspect that many adults are afraid that my last point is all too true. They suspect that boring old viewing – like boring old reading and boring old conversation – will be ignored even where the content is high-quality entertainment or information in favour of new technologies with lower-quality content. I have, however, seen nothing to suggest that young people will put up with such a situation more readily than any other discerning, demanding, outspoken and highly critical consumer group. To succeed in the digital age, broadcasters will need to mix and match the staple qualities of children's broadcasting which appeal to each new generation – imagination, humour, honesty – with the high design interactive technologies. If we assume that children are simply going to take to new technology because it is new technology we would be very mistaken.

Of course we have a lot to learn about the new services. In this sense we're all growing up with the technology and, like small children, asking a lot of questions about it and getting frustrated with the vagueness of the answers. Those answers will be clearer as the development and take-up of these services begins to spread. In the meantime, I believe we could all – policy-makers, regulators, broadcasters, programme-makers, presenters and viewers alike – profit by also picking up from children their enthusiasm, resilience and inventiveness. We then stand a good chance of establishing a society of high-quality information and entertainment services we can be proud of.

Your chairman mentioned that the three principal criteria that I have set in place for broadcasting policy, whether it applies to adults or children, to analogue or digital or interactive technology, are very simple. They are diversity of ownership, genuine choice for the viewer and high quality of programming. Those principles must apply to children's broadcasting as to adult broadcasting and they must apply also to interactive technology if it's to be successful. Children will play a vital part in making sure that happens. No broadcaster will be able to ignore their needs both as a specific consumer group or as developing human beings. Services which are directed at meeting the special needs of children will continue to have an important place in this new society and it is my hope that children will be able to say, looking back on these early days of the new digital age, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven."

*This is an edited version of Rt Hon Chris Smith's speech.*

As a preview to the rest of the day, this session concluded with a 'bluffer's guide to the digital revolution' – a tour de force provided by UK children's presenter **Gareth Jones**. Entitled *New Media Showcase*, this unravelled the complexities of the STB (set-top box), EPG (electronic programme guide) and coined a new phrase, the on-line entertainment centre, for the converged television (TV) and personal computer (PC), all with the help of several cardboard boxes. Jones ended with a warning, however: whatever the technology, 'content is king'.

> ***These kids, this digital generation, look at new media in ways that we do not.***
>
> **Linda Khan** agent provocateur

# children's new media: access, ownership, excellence

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Dr Claudia Langen Bertelsmann Foundation, Germany |
| **MODERATOR** | John Browning WIRED Europe, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Dr Carla Seal-Wanner @ccess4 @ll, USA |
| | Dr Nobuo Isshiki Child Media Research Group, Japan |
| | Robert Winter EBU, Switzerland |
| | Dr Milton Chen George Lucas Educational Foundation, USA |
| **PRODUCERS** | Dr Carla Seal-Wanner @ccess4 @ll, USA |
| | David Kleeman American Center for Children's Television |
| **SPONSORS** | Bertelsmann Foundation |
| | The Second World Summit on Television for Children |

Much has changed in the world of new media, even in the three years since the First World Summit. **Dr Claudia Langen**, Director of Media and Society at the Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany, chair of this session, observed that although the information superhighway had been on the agenda at that event, the focus had been on packaged multimedia software rather than interactive television, and the words Internet and World Wide Web had not even appeared in the programme. The task today was to isolate and explore some best practices in working with new media and to relate them to the 'letter and spirit' of the Children's Charter established in Melbourne in 1995: 'Then we will have models to adapt and people to collaborate with so that we might build towards the promise of the new media and avoid the pitfalls.' The idea was to look at the three broad themes addressed by the Charter, namely access, ownership and excellence in relation to children's new media.

Taking up this reference to the Charter, the session's moderator **John Browning**, European Editor of *Wired* magazine, outlined the way in which he felt interactive media were having an impact. Firstly, the nature of the Internet meant that it was not a case of one central source sending out information but rather everybody communicating with everybody else – many-to-many communication. Being connected becomes more valuable the more people there are to talk to and, with around a hundred million people now connected, growth is between 50 and 60 per cent a year.

Interactive media also break down the old broadcasting model based on spectrum scarcity and replace it with the convergence of television and interactive technologies. Predictions as to the extent of this transformation range from the Internet being used as an information back-up to television to the notion that television would become just another channel of the Web.

Turning to the first theme of the session, that of access, Browning questioned people's anxiety about 'haves' and 'have nots', wondering whether it might simply be a case of 'have nows' and 'have laters' as with the advent of television in the middle of the century. However, the issue of *restricting* access in order to protect children was being debated fiercely at all levels. Ownership in this new era of many-to-many communication presented the opportunity for children to build their own networks but, there again, this could involve risks. Finally, excellence would have to be looked at in the light of the changing nature of content and the organisations providing it. With the distinctions between audience and broadcaster becoming increasingly blurred, would public service continue to mean providing things for the public or would the public now serve themselves?

The first panellist to address these questions was **Dr Carla Seal-Wanner**, the founder of @ccess4 @ll (pronounced Access for All) in the USA. Citing examples of how people of all ages were increasingly turning to the Internet, she remarked that children in particular appeared to access information more interactively, using non-linear approaches to processing different items simultaneously. Producers were having to recognise this growing facility on the part of their younger audiences and listen to and involve them more actively: 'Our children are not just consumers of media, they are now learning how to create multimedia as well.'

Taking up Browning's point, Seal-Wanner did feel that the question of unequal access was having an impact, even within America. 'There's absolutely no doubt that electronic and information deprivation follows hard on the heels of economic deprivation, raising the spectre that today's poor children may have less chance than ever to participate as full citizens tomorrow,' she said. Whereas, for instance, children's access

to computers in high-income families had increased from 25 to 51 per cent from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, it had only risen from 2 to 4 per cent in low-income families.

> *'There's absolutely no doubt that electronic and information deprivation follows hard on the heels of economic deprivation.'*

Access was not the sole concern, however. Seal-Wanner asserted that while there was some exceptionally good material available through CD-ROMs and on-line, much was not well targeted or developed for its audience. In addition, there was the worry not just about inappropriate material but also of information overload: 'In the end the problem with net surfing is that there's a lot of cyber drownings.' With an estimated 4,000 sites being added to the Internet every 20 minutes, users were understandably demanding better systems for managing and evaluating information and she discussed how so-called 'software agents' were being developed to achieve this. Seal-Wanner's own new initiative, @ccess4 @ll, would use a system of this kind to act as an international information clearing house of reviewed and selected interactive material of quality for children. Operating as an on-line subscriber-based service with a sliding fee scale, this could be customised for particular children's needs, paying particular attention to developmental appropriateness, to girls and to minority groups. It would form partnerships with excellent producers in order to set a high standard for the entire industry and would aim to 'help all young learners develop the most important literacy skill of all, learning to discern the highest quality media and the most valuable uses of it.' Continuing the 'wet' metaphor, its three goals were to provide a flotation device, to make waves and, thirdly, to give children the tools to 'build an ark to stay above the floodline'.

In the belief that the latter is the most empowering aspect of new media, Seal-Wanner ended with a website made by children at a very poor school in Ohio. The design principles, established by the children themselves, included 'the little brother rule', intended to ensure that new visitors to the website would be looked after. As she said, this amply demonstrated that children have no trouble in getting 'the soul of the machine to surface' – something that adults had been trying to do for years.

Next to speak was **Dr Nobuo Isshiki**, Senior Producer for the NHK Satellite Broadcast Division and a member of the Japanese Child Media Research Group. He explained that this committee had been formed in 1991 with the goal of enhancing the richness of childhood using new media in order to 'pull at the heart strings of children, triggering excitement, surprise and inspiration, often to make virtually possible what is physically impossible.' Sharing a commitment to the idea that children should have equal opportunities, researchers from medicine, engineering, computer science, psychology, education and other disciplines had come together to examine whether multimedia could be used to bring sick children the normal benefits of growing up, such as communication, exercise and play. Using technology more often associated with the amusement arcade, virtual reality could be used to allow children to forget that they were in hospital, thus radically improving their quality of life.

Examples ranged from a virtual visit to a zoo used with muscular dystrophy patients to software designed for children unable to manipulate a mouse or keyboard. Children in two different hospitals linked by a digital network had been able to play together and terminally ill patients on a summer camp had enjoyed the soccer game of their dreams with a professional player via a satellite link. When the idea of natural contact between human beings was not possible, concluded Isshiki, new technology could at least 'patch the hurt of children'.

Some very different but equally exciting projects were outlined by **Robert Winter**, Head of the Education Unit of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) based in Geneva. Set up to support educational broadcasters in terms of co-production, distribution and, more recently, new digital developments, the unit is now funded by 18 European public broadcasters with further finance from the European Commission and the EBU. Aware of the need to embrace interactive technologies and thereby increase access for Europe's teachers, the unit's website offers information on all broadcast material and is clearing rights for much of it to be adapted for use as CD-ROMs or on-line, in some cases working with commercial sponsors. It also evaluates and recommends new educational software.

Multimedia connections between schools and the European Parliament are being established through the unit's ParliaNet project which will initially allow six schools to communicate via a video conferencing link with MEPs. Another project links schools from different countries in a scheme in which they adopt a local monument and exchange information about it through the Internet. Similarly, Net Days Europe involves numerous projects between schools using E-mail, the Internet and video conferencing. To Winter, the wider potential is typified by the French film producer who runs a cyber cafe in Dakar in Senegal with a privately-funded website projected on to a big screen in the village square. Children can work with his one PC to surf the Net, swapping information with others all over Europe.



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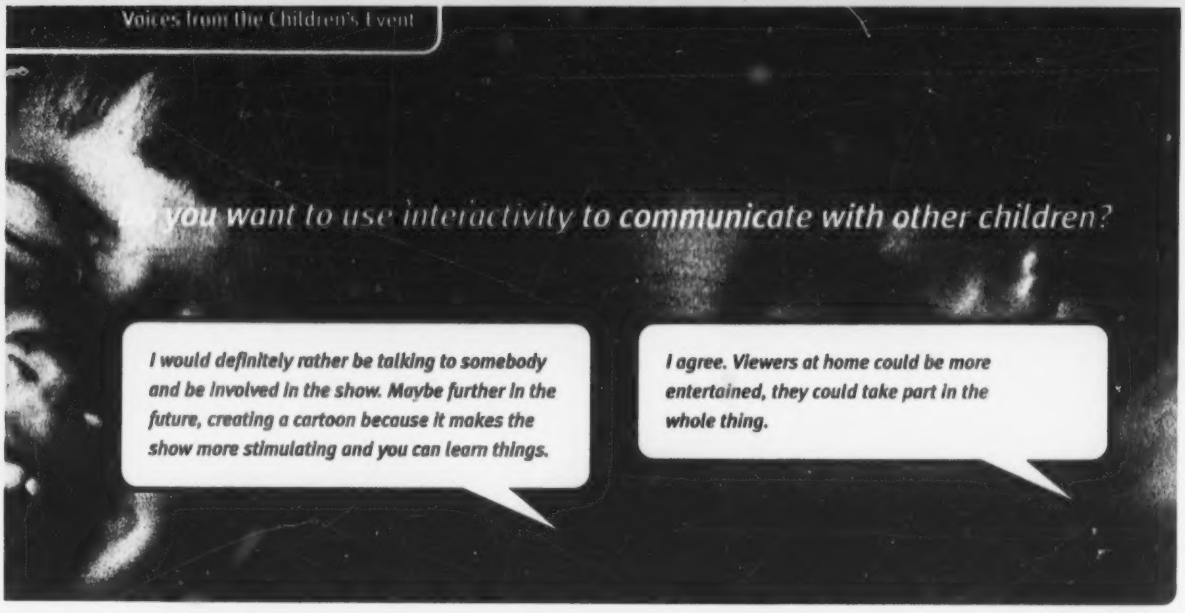
you want to use interactivity to communicate with other children?
I would definitely rather be talking to somebody and be involved in the show. Maybe further in the future, creating a cartoon because it makes the show more stimulating and you can learn things.
I agree. Viewers at home could be more entertained, they could take part in the whole thing.

'Television should not be left out,' however, stresses Winter. The unit has just set up a new partnership with the animation company Telemagination in order to use well-known characters from existing programming for educational formats such as videos about safety or healthy eating. 'We're constantly looking at these kinds of partnerships so that we can build on the expertise that we have already within the broadcasters and develop new products.'

> *'Our object is to make life in hospital as pleasant as possible for children who are struggling against intractable diseases.'*

The final speaker, **Dr Milton Chen**, Executive Director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation in the USA, began with the story of a four-year-old boy asked to spell his name. The fact that he included the space between Christian name and surname epitomised for Chen the nature of the new digital generation, totally at home with new technology. So is this a threat or an opportunity for those working in children's television? Convinced it offers enormous potential, Chen felt that, having underestimated the public appetite for educational television over the years, public broadcasters had realised that they should become become actively involved.

Addressing the priorities of the session, Chen felt much more had to be done about increasing access, even in America. This included tackling the psychological barrier which prevented many people from taking advantage of the access they had. Regarding ownership, he was excited that children could make their own media, especially as: 'one of the best ways to become more educated about the media ... is to make your own.' Although these would be amateur productions, the experience would in itself lead to professional expertise. Excellence in new media was already being rewarded through schemes such as the Global Information Infrastructure Awards, which has both children's and education categories. One of last year's winners was from a poor, crime-ridden neighbourhood near Silicon Valley offering community classes. In another, schoolchildren had worked into holiday time to complete the project, demonstrating that commitment can overcome access problems.

Chen concluded by showing an example of how the George Lucas Educational Foundation intends to spread the word about the use of new media for education. Presented by Robin Williams, the documentary *Learn and Live* provides real illustrations of how learning can be revitalised in the process.

Discussion turned to anxieties about access to potentially harmful material and the merits or otherwise of devices designed to block content at the reception rather than the distribution point. Whereas Seal-Wanner thought that people tended to be overly conservative on the provision of sex education for children, she felt strongly that children should be protected from websites that encouraged the enactment of violence as part of games. There was little confidence in filtering technologies for television or on-line and Chen instead advocated putting children on a 'media diet': 'Let's cut down on media calories, use it less as a baby-sitter ...'

While Isshiki again stressed the positive opportunities offered by global communication between children, Winter felt that much would depend upon the quality of the information being exchanged. Even more important, according to Seal-Wanner, was the need for children to have a set of values in order to become more discerning in their choices. Media education was just as crucial for parents, if not more so, in order to help them find their way around the new opportunities. Since 'new media' had occupied a day of this conference as opposed to a session at the first, she suggested that the next Summit should be for 'children and media' rather than 'children's television'. Finally, Browning reiterated his confidence in the new dawn with a quote from Thomas Payne, 'We have it in our power to begin the world anew.'

# learning byte by byte

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|---|---|
| CHAIR | Ulla Martikainen-Florath TV1, Finland |
| SPEAKERS | Birgit Bosch DigiVision GbR, Germany |
| | Wendy Pye Wendy Pye Group, New Zealand |
| | Robin Mudge BBC Learning Station, UK |
| PRODUCERS | Chris Jelley Director of Television and Video, YITM, UK |

Educational broadcasters are being challenged by the new digital media, observed the chair of this session, **Ulla Martikainen-Florath**, herself Head of Educational Broadcasting for TV1 in Finland. In comparison with traditional television, she continued, they offer many advantages: they are interactive, they are not bound by schedules, and they can be offered globally. The panellists would be demonstrating some of the best uses of CD-ROM and on-line multimedia.

***'It's such an exciting time. I'm glad I'm alive and I'm glad I'm doing something for kids.'***

First was **Birgit Bosch**, Managing Partner in DigiVision GbR in Germany, who outlined the thinking behind *Surfing California*, a CD-ROM designed to help teenagers practise and improve their English. Developed in conjunction with ARD: WDR, this capitalised on high-quality material already available, thereby providing a supplement to existing programmes without enormous cost. The project, begun in 1996, aimed to create a multimedia package which would tackle language learning through topics likely to interest the users, involve real communication with native speakers and allow for constant updating. *Surfing California* can be used both off-line as a CD-ROM and on-line via the Internet, with the material divided into themed channels incorporating music and film clips and covering everything from entertainment to serious social issues. While the CD-ROM enables vocabulary practice, the Internet encourages users to overcome any psychological barrier to communicating in a foreign language by allowing them to remain anonymous while they try out their language skills.

California had been chosen because of its obvious appeal to young people, but a similar project based on life in England will be ready in the summer, and it is hoped to find partners for others involving other European countries. Bosch explained that government backing had allowed them to keep the price low (around £10), but that a reduction in the number of video clips in future projects would cut copyright costs. Feedback from schools was also being sought in order to assess the project's effectiveness as a teaching tool.

The next speaker, **Wendy Pye**, Managing Director of the Wendy Pye Group in New Zealand, began by recalling a childhood spent reading books from England that bore no resemblance to the world outside her door. Now, with the availability of satellite television, and possibly WebTV, there was a chance to give children a 'better deal'. Her own vision, based on the phenomenal success of her educational books around the world, was to create 'global villages of education' using the Internet. Designed for children between five and seven, her websites cover subjects such as the environment and link in with National Geographic and NASA so that children can communicate directly with each other and with subject specialists. She felt it essential that sites were developed by teachers rather than technical experts or marketing people and that they had a 'purposeful context': 'Everyone gets very excited about the Internet but unless it's terribly focused for classroom practice I don't see how it can be used.'

One of the biggest challenges was to train primary teachers, mainly women, to use these new resources with confidence so that the Internet could become an integral part of the classroom. Her company is involved in projects in several countries including Singapore, South Africa, Australia and the UK, where her own initiative, shared and guided reading, is part of the Government's 'literacy hour' scheme in schools. Committed to the idea of universal literacy, she sees the Internet as the 'launching pad to the great literacy movement of the future', and is proud that the means by which this is being made possible, her own approach to reading, stems from a country the size of New Zealand.

Again, however, access to the hardware is clearly variable. Primary school teachers tend to be further down the queue and the cost of using the Internet is much higher in the UK than in America, for instance. To Pye, the answer was to lobby government for financial support as had been done in the USA for quality television. In a country such as South Africa, where she is working with the ANC to accelerate black education, the goal was to make the Internet available by whatever means possible. Looking further ahead, she predicted the demise of both PCs and CD-ROMs because of the rate at which technology was moving: 'It's such an exciting time. I'm glad I'm alive and I'm glad I'm doing something for kids,' she said.



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The final speaker was **Robin Mudge**, Creative Director of the BBC's Learning Station, which was only launched in January 1998. As he explained, this service operates as a channel in its own right, using material designed not only to support programmes but to take advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by the Internet.

One of its core aspects is a web index for teachers, compiled by practitioners who have tracked down and evaluated material relevant to the curriculum. Another is a teachers' forum which enables discussion of issues generated by users themselves. The home service, offering learning opportunities away from the school environment, has started an exam revision service, at the moment designed for users wanting to try out practice GCSE exam papers in the privacy of their own home, with teachers available at certain times to give advice. Having only been available for a few weeks, this was already receiving 12,000 visitors a day.

> ***'We just need to think in an open-ended way rather than a closed way.'***

With the idea of moving from the Internet as information provider to its use for interactive entertainment, the BBC has looked at different ways in which it can tell stories involving learning activities. The *Spywatch* programme, for example, is a full-costume drama for children with reading difficulties, the narrative of which gives users a reason to carry out interactive activities and word exercises, not necessarily all on screen, as part of the story.

As a former programme-maker, Mudge relished the lack of channel controllers and commissioning editors in this new medium and also felt that experienced producers were in a good position to adapt their skills. Although they were more used to providing linear material, they had gone through an interactive process in exploring different avenues along the way: 'We just need to think in an open-ended way rather than a closed way, but at the same time use our story-telling techniques to give people a reason to want to interact with the stuff in the first place.'

Young viewers will increasingly expect an interactive service.

The combination of traditional television programming and Internet material being developed for WebTV in the US would soon be in the UK, reported Mudge, bringing with it still further challenges for producers. He showed two examples, the first a daytime fitness programme which enabled viewers to enter their personal details on their digital remote control and then receive customised information via their television screen. The second was an interactive version of a primetime education series, *Local Heroes*, which, if viewed on a computer, offered further interactive options which could be taken up after the programme.

Turning to other possibilities offered by the digital age, Mudge showed the use of radio on demand via the Internet and the shape of computers now going on to the market which would be much more suitable for home use than full-size PCs.

His final demonstration, in his own words, took the 'medium right into the child's space'. This was the toy dinosaur Barney, based on the children's series. Developed by Microsoft, this is designed to synchronise with the television programme, whether viewed off air or on tape, clearly offering further educational possibilities.

Despite obvious enthusiasm for the potential of such technological wizardry, the questions of cost and access resurfaced in questions from the floor throughout the session. Ultimately, how would it be possible to maintain the idea of public service in a digitised Internet environment? To which there was no answer.



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# joining the dots

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| **CHAIR** | |
| **PANELLISTS** | Deborah Forte Scholastic Productions, USA<br>Sarah Hennings BBC, UK<br>Eve Baron Canal j, France<br>Jill Arnold World at Play, USA<br>Scott Webb Nickelodeon Online, USA |
| **PRODUCER** | Julie Adair BBC, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | Nickelodeon |

In a changing media landscape, how can content providers be sure that they will appeal to children and keep their attention? **Deborah Forte**, Executive Vice President of Scholastic Productions in the USA, began this session with some statistics concerning the proliferation of children's media in the USA and then showed how her own company had adapted a popular programme for consumption through different media platforms.

Whereas the constant for adults working in the media industry is change, for American children it is choice between more traditional television than ever before, plus other options such as the Internet, video games and CD-ROMs. Although television and video continue to dominate in the USA – about 50 per cent have television in their room – computer usage is increasingly common, with 40 per cent having a PC in the home. The average weekly viewing figure for children is 21 hours, but children report spending four hours a week using a computer and at least an hour each day with a video game. Between five and six million children have access to the Internet at home and some forecasts predict that 24 per cent of households will be online by 2000. At the same time, a third of children between eight and 12 report reading a book other than for school in the last week.

Clearly children feel comfortable navigating this diverse mix. They have little loyalty to a specific media platform and their choices are more to do with content. But will these platforms compete with or complement each other? Forte then showed how Scholastic had developed *Goosebumps*, originally a popular children's book series, for a variety of media, while aiming to stay true to its basic appeal – a combination of scary stories and humour. For television the goal was to provide a rollercoaster ride for family enjoyment. For the CD-ROM, children became part of the adventure by guiding the story themselves. Finally, the idea for the website was to give children an opportunity to feed in their views, including the chance to participate in an essay contest – to which the response has been 2,500 entries a week.

She predicted that, long term, there would be a shift in how children spent their leisure time. At the moment television was still the significant force, with the proven ability to lead children on to other media formats. Children would ultimately follow the content that appealed to them and so it was important for good material to be available across all types of media.

The first panellist was **Sarah Hennings**, Product Development Director, BBC Worldwide Multimedia, whose particular expertise was in CD-ROM products. Having published six titles for children since 1996, the most successful – *Wallace and Gromit*, *Noddy* and *Pingu* – had been among the top titles in the education sector. A further eight titles would appear in 1998, including *Teletubbies* and a children's natural history programme, *The Really Wild Show*. In all cases, it was the popularity of the television programme which had created the brand on an international scale. There had to be a global approach in order to have a sufficiently large market. Multimedia products take up to nine months to develop, a games product even longer, and the costs are high. However, her view was that the business would grow as long as children's views were taken into account.

Hennings explained that product development involves work with educational consultants, constant consumer testing and effective marketing and distribution. Above all, she said, 'If you're creating a new media product then it has to have added value and create a new experience for the child, but it needs to keep the essential ingredients of the programme.' Children wanted well-known characters, several different activities and a feeling that they were progressing. She showed excerpts from a *Noddy* CD-ROM for children between three and six with activities ranging from colouring and creating animated sequences to driving around Toy Town. Parents' views were also important. They, too, wanted a rewarding experience for their children, together with brand integrity.

Although Hennings felt that games would continue to be a major driver in the CD-ROM market with a growth rate of over 40 per cent, the education sector was the fastest growing at 93 per cent. New formats like DVD-ROM (digital video disk) would ultimately replace CD-ROMs, but she predicted that both would co-exist for some years. In the longer term, children would be looking for on-line alternatives over which they could have more control.

**Eve Baron**, Director of Programmes at Canal j in France, also felt that television had lost its 'sacred character' and was now one among several forms of entertainment for children, despite the fact that there are now six channels devoted to them exclusively in France. One in four children between 11 and 19 have access to a home computer and use it every day, most of them playing with games software, although domestic Internet connection is only around one per cent.

> ***'Sometimes I think the best thing we could do for kids is tell them when it's time to turn off the television and turn off the computer.'***

Terrestrial viewing among children has declined as their attention had been drawn to specialist cable and satellite channels such as Canal j. Having reached two million subscribing households at the start of 1998, the channel is delivered to ten per cent of all French households by cable or satellite and is the preferred choice for children between eight and 11. It has responded to the huge interest in multimedia with a popular magazine programme, *Des Souris et des rom*, devoted to advising children about new games and hearing their own views. Another popular show is an interactive video game called *Pikto*, in which children can participate through an audiotel line which is receiving 9,000 connections a month. Canal j also has a website primarily designed for children and a Minitel line which enables viewers to contact the channel using the telephone and a screen.

Despite all this interactivity, the channel still considers television to be its core business. Baron's view is that different media should join forces rather than competing: 'Let's therefore trust that these tools will not replace one another and through juxtaposition and combination they will enrich the users' universe.'

According to the next speaker, **Jill Arnold**, founder of American company World at Play, a company aiming to link children across the globe through the Internet and television, there was no question as to whether broadcast entertainment was changing. It had done so already, but it remained for producers to bridge the gap between passive and active programming and to provide more compelling products. In her view, new forms of play patterns were emerging among children which were not being reflected adequately by the new media. The essence of the Internet was a sense of community which in itself could engender more interesting entertainment if specifically targeted.

The idea behind World at Play was to use the Internet to build connections between children globally, using stories with related interactive games and bulletin boards, all of which encouraged children's participation. This strategy extended to merchandise but, said Arnold, 'our dots have depth, in the stories, in the characters and in the child's ability to move freely and contribute.' Targeted at children between eight and 12 for whom she felt there was an enormous void in terms of content, the real characters appeal to girls and the fantasy characters to boys but there is the capacity to cater for each group specifically. She also felt that organisational infrastructures would change to meet the demands of children brought up in the digital age and that their tendency to choose the Internet would set the pace.

Finally, **Scott Webb**, Executive Creative Director of Nickelodeon Online in the USA, agreed that the audience would dictate how different platforms would fare in the future. He had found that parents and children now expected a popular show such as *Blue's Clues* to appear in different media formats and that Nickelodeon's response to this had met with a good reception. In another instance, a fictional star called Natalie had been designed from the outset as a 'cross-media property' for exposure on both television and on-line.

In Webb's view, an area ripe for development is children's news. Nickelodeon's own news for kids could be extended to other media in order to make it as topical and relevant as possible. His worry was that an increase in media did not necessarily mean that children would benefit, especially if producers did not live up to their responsibilities. Recounting the tale of a three-year-old complaining that his remote control did no more than change channels, he was sure that children already had high expectations of how they could get involved. His other concern was that this media should be kept in perspective: 'Sometimes I think that the best thing we could do for kids is tell them when it's time to turn off the television and turn off the computer.' Instead, they could tune into 'the most advanced system ever created – yourself.'

Discussion continued with general agreement that children's expectations were indeed leading the way, especially in a medium in which it was so easy for them to become active participants.

> ***'On-line is a very active medium which demands thinking as well as doing.'***
>
> **Linda Khan** agent provocateur



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# flooding the world

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Mike Phillips writer and broadcaster, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Andrew Lees Microsoft, UK |
| | Katherine Bernard Canal +, France |
| | Lesley Osborne Australian Broadcasting Authority |
| | Spyros Pappas European Commission |
| | Mergan Moodley K TV, South Africa |
| **PRODUCER** | Europe Singh BBC, in association with Charles Brown AMX Digital |
| **SPONSOR** | DGX The MEDIA Programme of the European Union |

UK writer and broadcaster **Mike Phillips** opened the session by explaining that it would be divided into three sections: the impact on children's television of both globalisation and the explosion of content created by new channels and by the Internet; the response of the regulators to this new situation; and, finally, the issue of local needs and diversity.

**Andrew Lees** from Microsoft UK focused first on recent developments in computing and the 'success loop' of innovation and competition which has taken this technology far further than originally anticipated. In his view, the Internet constituted the biggest step since the introduction of the original personal computer (PC) and had brought about a communications revolution because of its capacity to connect every computing device worldwide. The growth of the PC and the Internet has been quite dramatic in comparison to take-up of television, with PC penetration at slightly over 40 per cent in the USA and around 25 per cent in the UK, where it had a later start.

The drive for convergence between computing, television and telecommunications was really the set-top box, said Lees, with its capacity not only to deliver digital television but to provide enough computer power and memory for the screen to become a more general purpose tool. However, his own feeling was that although the technology would converge in terms of its compatibility, the devices used for different aspects of interactive information-gathering or entertainment would remain separate. People would soon be living what he termed a 'Web lifestyle', turning to the Internet for information, entertainment and communication purposes in the way that they now unthinkingly 'consume' television or the telephone. Television, currently a fast-moving noisy medium, with one-way content controlled by a broadcaster, would adopt some of the characteristics of the Net in becoming on demand, more personalised and interactive.

Microsoft is involved in bringing about this increased compatibility between television and computing, one of the most advanced examples being WebTV, already available in the USA. At a cost of US$199 and a monthly US$15 subscription for the interactive service, the Web set-top box allows for not just Internet and computing access through the television but also enhances the television experience for those wanting interactivity. This had been taken up by around half a million people within 12 months, 65 per cent of whom did not own a PC and 86 per cent of whom were not on-line. There were also indications that WebTV users were spending two-and-a-half times longer on the Internet than the average PC user.

As Lees pointed out, the computing world had developed to date with competition law as the only form of regulation. In his own view, the very nature of the Internet would ensure diversity without the need to adapt regulations originally used in the media industry. Even when it came to protection from harm, his own preference was for self-regulation. In the case of the Internet, for instance, parents could use PICS (Platform for Internet Content Selection) which would allow them to block access to certain material according to a ratings system used by content providers.

Representing another major player in the new media environment, **Katherine Bernard** of Canal + in France, outlined the priorities of her own organisation, Europe's largest cable provider, in relation to children. With a presence in several European countries and in Africa, the company's philosophy is to allow each channel total autonomy in its choice of programming in order to respect local needs and cultural differences. There are several common principles, however. In relation to children's programming, the objective is to achieve complementarity between the channels on offer in order to provide more choice. In France, for instance, its premium channel focuses on teenagers and young adults, an area neglected by the other channels. Similarly, in the early days of Canal + in 1984, the aim had been to provide children's programmes at different times to other channels.

Subscription allows the Canal + channels freedom to retain their independence and to invest heavily in French production and co-production. The pay-TV approach also makes use of electronic access control systems which enable parents to pre-select the programmes they consider suitable for their children.

The first regulator to speak, **Lesley Osborne**, Standards Manager at the Australian Broadcasting Authority, recognised that global Internet access was challenging the whole concept of audiences and local culture. Not only could children in Australia visit the websites of programmes on offer on the other side of the world, but soon the programmes themselves would be accessible via Internet technology.

> ***'...it would be a pity if fear of harmful content deters the use of these great new services.'***

Explaining that Australians had always been quick to take up new technology such as VCRs and mobile telephones, Osborne reported that Internet access among families with teenagers had grown from six per cent to 25 per cent within the last two-and-a-half years. As relatively affluent people, distant from their neighbours, they had embraced the communications opportunities offered by the Internet, and ranked sixth in the world in terms of its use.

In the face of this explosion of content from Cyberspace, government and regulators are 'treading warily'. Termed 'co-regulation', their approach is to promote values already promulgated in the traditional media which seek to balance protection of children with freedom of expression, recognising that no national government can impose solutions. Having made recommendations for an appropriate regulatory scheme in July 1996, the ABA was about take on the formal role of content regulator for the Internet in Australia, reported Osborne, building on its experience of 'light-touch' regulation of multi-channel broadcasting.

Osborne explained that the concern over the Internet was to protect children from two main types of material, firstly that often called 'illegal', such as child pornography, excessive violence or instruction in crime, and secondly sexually explicit or violent material which is regarded as unsuitable or perhaps harmful. The lack of any centralised control means that service providers cannot be held responsible for material that they may not even be aware that they have flowing through their systems. Instead, responsibility lies with content providers not likely to be interested in the kind of corporate citizenship demonstrated by more traditional purveyors of information and entertainment. Osborne explained that the co-regulatory framework to be introduced by government would require the co-operation of law enforcement agencies, content and service providers and users at both a domestic and international level. Self-regulatory codes of practice are to be developed by the industry in consultation with the ABA in order to protect consumer interests, bring criminal proceedings against those producing illegal content where possible, react to complaints and generally raise awareness about ways that parents and teachers might limit children's access to harmful content. Because of the global nature of the Internet, however, concerted action over issues such as child pornography might involve international police agencies or hotlines such as that run by the Internet Watch Foundation recently established in the UK.

'Perhaps the most effective solution is to involve parents and teachers in the supervision of Internet use,' said Osborne. For instance, they might establish ground rules, including ways of protecting personal privacy, guide children towards quality content, and take steps to block unsuitable material using filter software such as the PICS system already mentioned. In the belief that such labelling of material will only be effective if widely accepted, the ABA is part of a working group aiming to develop an internationally accepted scheme. In addition, Osborne felt that community education initiatives would play a vital role: 'We all have an interest in children and their families knowing about them and it would be a pity if fear of harmful content deters the use of these great new services.'

Echoing the concern that new media such as the Internet should serve the interests of young people without exposing them to harm, the next speaker, **Spyros Pappas**, Director General of DGX of the European Commission, agreed that co-operation was the way forward.





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On the question of protection, said Pappas, the Commission had proposed a recommendation and an action plan, both based on extensive consultation in response to a green paper released in 1996. Directed at all audio-visual and information services, including the Internet, the recommendation puts forward positive steps to promote quality content and encourages the development of new parental control facilities and a self-regulation framework based on existing national legislation. The action plan complements this with financial support for some practical measures in three main areas: a trans-European network of information centres, or hotlines, designed to contain the circulation of illegal material; work towards international agreement on proper identification of potentially harmful content which can then be filtered out by users; and an awareness programme for users on the assets and drawbacks of a global communication network.

A more creative approach was also being pursued in the form of the proposed European Foundation for Audio-Visual and Multimedia in Education. Based on a public-private partnership, this is intended to act as a centre for study and analysis in order to promote best practice, to stimulate the use of educational services and to support their production, distribution and evaluation internationally. Pappas reported that 15 major hardware producers and telecom operators had already set up the European Education Partnership, to be one of the pillars of the new institution. A second pillar would be the European SchoolNet due to be established in April 1998 with the support of education ministers. The third was the grouping of European public and private broadcasters and leading publishing houses. The Foundation is due to be launched during the next European Net Days in October this year which would be promoting use of the Internet in schools.

Pappas concluded by reiterating the European Commission's objective of encouraging a strong commitment to both protective and creative approaches. He also mentioned the ongoing consultation on convergence, due to come to an end in April 1998, which proposed three options for the future direction of regulation: maintenance of the existing structure, extended to deal with new media; the gradual development of a new framework; or, thirdly, the establishment of an entirely new regulatory system. On all these matters, he stressed, there had to be broad interaction between those involved in policy concerning culture, audio-visual services and education.

The final speaker, **Mergan Moodley**, Chief Executive of K-TV in South Africa, focused attention on how globalisation was affecting a region such as Southern Africa. Only 20 years old, television had nevertheless taken root, undergoing a huge expansion since the launch of the PAS-4 satellite in 1995. According to Moodley, audiences were fed with a wide variety of product from around the world, much of it irrelevant to their cultural needs. After all, in the absence of any regulatory requirements to do otherwise, it made economic sense for most satellite channels to simply beam down their home-grown product.

Closer to home, however, South Africa's only subscription satellite service, M-NET, has taken a different view since its launch in 1986, realising that it relied on viewers' direct support. Its children's service, K-TV, started in 1990, has become a powerful brand, not just in South Africa but across around 37 countries where it is received either terrestrially or by satellite. Focused mainly on children aged between three and 13, K-TV is 'presented by kids for kids' and constantly updated to meet changing demand based on regular research findings.

Moodley explained that the channel places great emphasis on activities outside 'the box', involving viewers across Africa in activities such as competitions and correspondence. Locally produced links and programmes filmed in different African countries promote cross-cultural exchange and awareness, reinforced by the ambassadorial role of the young presenters. Interactivity is increasing, with viewers encouraged to mail letters through the channel's special post boxes or to contact the K-TV website. After such a range of contributions, chair Phillips focused debate on self-regulation, questioning its feasibility in a commercial context. However, regulators and operators alike felt that this offered the most pragmatic approach in an entirely unpredictable environment. Co-operation was essential in order for issues to be discussed openly as they arose, without immediate resort to a more dangerous option – over-regulation.

# what's happening in the bedroom – young people and new media

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|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Professor Joseph Groebel University of Utrecht, The Netherlands |
| **SPEAKERS** | Dr Sonia Livingstone LSE, UK |
| | Dr Massimiliano Tarrozzi University of Bologna, Italy |
| | Dr Binod Agrawal TALEEM Research Foundation, India |
| | Dr Kathryn Montgomery Center for Media Education, USA |
| **PRODUCER** | Shehina Fazal City University, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | Canal j |
| **SUPPORT** | DGXII of the European Union |

'To err is human but to really foul things up requires a computer.' Perhaps an outdated quote in some environments, but sufficiently relevant to this session for it to be used by its chair, **Professor Joseph Groebel**, a media psychologist from the University of Utrecht in The Netherlands. As he implied, the term 'new media' is relative. The object of this session was to identify whether it is really the case that today's children are using media in an entirely different way. Taking a scientific approach, he wondered what people made of recent research indicating that whereas the verbal intelligence of children had declined, visual ability was on the increase. He felt it was important to assess the emotional impact of new media and their effect on attention span and the motor abilities of children.

The first speaker, **Dr Sonia Livingstone**, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics, based her talk on some early findings from Children, Young People and the Changing Media Environment, a research project being carried out both in Britain and other European countries which will report in March 1999.

This has looked at children and young people between six and 17 in terms of both old and new media, with an emphasis on the social context – on what media children have access to, how they use them and what meanings they give to them. The aim was to obtain enough descriptive information in order to set a baseline for measuring change. The methods used in most of the countries involved a national survey, a diary indicating time use and interviews with parents as well as children. The latter included more creative methods such as encouraging children to convey their impressions of the media through drawings.

Representations varied from a picture of traditional media use with the television as the centre point of family life in the public space of the living room to those of children either on their own or with a friend watching television in their bedroom. Thus the notion of a shared culture, in which parents, and particularly fathers, regulated the use of television, is moving to a point where children are beginning to find other kinds of spaces for media use. Often thought of as a retreat for children, the bedroom has only more recently become a 'warm, accepted place for leisure' complete with diverse forms of media. This in turn has tended to raise parental anxieties on several counts: the demise of family life and the rise of lonely and isolated children, together with a sense of children engaging with unknown and possibly worrying media content that parents are unable to monitor. However, to Livingstone, based on interviews with a large number of children, such concerns are too pessimistic and alarmist. Children themselves tend to view the bedroom as a very social place where they can escape parental monitoring and be with their friends.

Still focusing on bedrooms as new places to watch old media, comparison across a few European countries indicated that although this was a trend in terms of older children being more likely to have such access, it was particularly marked for children, including younger age groups, in the UK. Livingstone also highlighted the finding that this use of bedroom space was heavily inversely skewed, with children of parents in higher socio-economic groups being less likely to have a television in their bedroom. Video recorders are an increasing phenomenon in the bedroom, too. Twenty per cent of British children had their own VCR, again more commonly among those of lower socio-economic status.

Turning to personal computers (PCs) in bedrooms, Livingstone said that the national comparisons showed a different picture, with Swedish and German children, particularly teenagers, more likely to have access than those in the UK. These figures should not be taken to represent overall access to PCs in the home, however. Whereas figures were similar for bedroom use between the UK and The Netherlands, 85 per cent of Dutch homes had a PC as compared with only 48 per cent of British homes.

Taken together with the finding that British children are most likely to have game machines in their rooms, either linked to a television or hand-held, these figures indicate that children in the UK rate screen entertainment fairly highly. Certainly television is the medium that still dominates children's leisure time, said Livingstone, both as an activity and something they talk about with friends. In contrast, computer games or PCs, particularly for more serious use, are way behind, with book reading declining with age and between genders, with more girls reading than boys. Those with television in their room watch slightly more than those without, with one-fifth of those surveyed claiming to watch it before school in the morning and two-fifths saying they watch television in their bedroom from when they return from school until after the 9pm watershed. European comparisons indicate that the leisure time available in different countries varies enormously, with 'bedtime' being a rather British concept.

***'The new multimedia bedroom is the ideal compromise that, from their parents' point of view, both entertains the children and keeps them safe.'***

Any attempt to assess Internet access is best thought of in terms of trends rather than absolute numbers because of its rapid growth, although it is still some way behind multimedia and CD-ROMs. Here, however, the home is clearly a source of social inequality, with children of higher income families having markedly more access, but not necessarily in their bedrooms. About a quarter of the children interviewed had used the Internet at a friend's or relative's house, but there was clearly less discrepancy across social groups in terms of access at school. In view of this social stratification, also evident to varying degrees in other countries, it was perhaps better to make comparisons between the poorest group of children in each country.

Despite worries about the need for information technology skills with regard to the job market, the research had found an enormously positive image of the new media environment among children. This was perhaps typified by a picture of the ideal bedroom in 2000 drawn by a 10-year-old boy showing screens around the wall and telephones around the bed, all controlled through a super box in the centre – bedroom culture as autonomy, with some conspicuous consumption thrown in.

Although it might seem that British children showed more of a trend towards individualised screen entertainment than other countries, Livingstone felt that much would depend upon the quality of the content. Interviews with parents indicated that they were not too worried about their children's bedroom culture, partly because they had enormous faith in the programme content available and partly because they saw the risks in the outside world as far greater: 'The new multimedia bedroom is the ideal compromise that, from their parents' point of view, both entertains the children and keeps them safe'.

**Dr Massimiliano Tarrozzi** from the University of Bologna in Italy also had some recent research to share with the audience, in his case dealing with children's use of the Internet. Although this was still a marginal activity among children in Italy, it was still felt useful to look at various aspects of a rapidly growing phenomenon which, as always with a new medium, tended to raise concerns among the public. Both quantitative and qualitative methods had been used to explore four main areas: the use of the Internet within the family, at school and at other access points and an analysis of websites used by children.

The main focus for the research, the medium-sized northern city of Bologna, is unusual in that the Internet is considered a public service and thus available free to all citizens, explained Tarrozzi. Figures of 15 per cent access for children up to 18 in their homes and 33.8 per cent in schools cannot therefore not be extrapolated more widely across Italy. School use is actually quite limited in terms of pupil access, with the Internet being used mainly by the few staff equipped to do so. Some training of pupils is undertaken, particularly to increase motivation and proficiency, especially in relation to technical subjects. Internet use at home starts at about 12 and, contrary to public perception, numbers of male and female users are similar. This occurs mainly among children who have used it at school or whose parents are particularly enthusiastic, although reasons for use reveal a gap between generations. Whereas children say they use it for fun, parents think of it in terms of enlarging horizons and private study. This is borne out by the fact that there seems to be strong parental control of children's use of the Internet, with parents and children often using it together and

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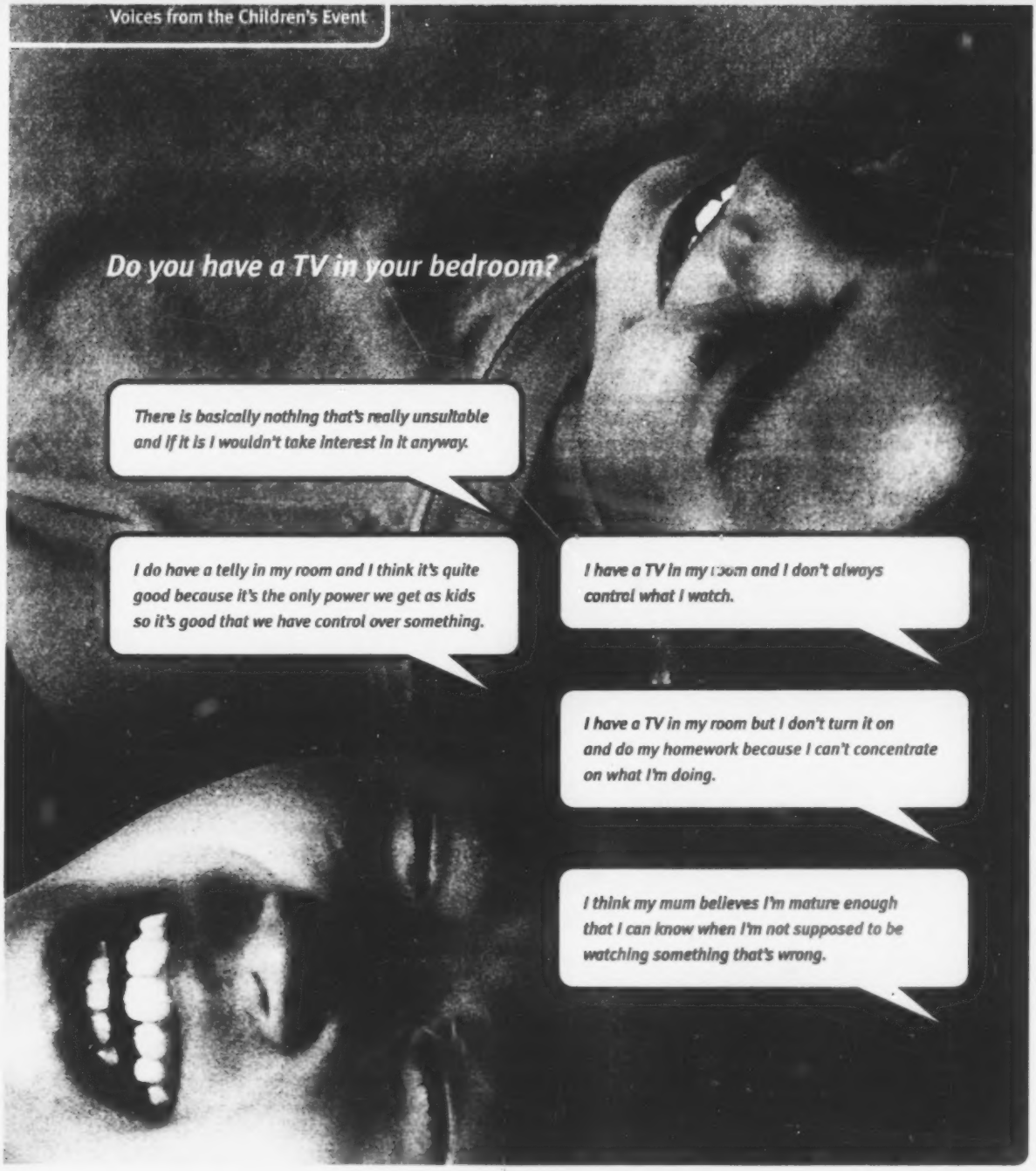
Do you have a TV in your bedroom?
There is basically nothing that's really unsuitable and if it is I wouldn't take interest in it anyway.
I do have a telly in my room and I think it's quite good because it's the only power we get as kids so it's good that we have control over something.
I have a TV in my room and I don't always control what I watch.
I have a TV in my room but I don't turn it on and do my homework because I can't concentrate on what I'm doing.
I think my mum believes I'm mature enough that I can know when I'm not supposed to be watching something that's wrong.

fathers tending to check the family E-mail. This optimistic view may be illusory, however, with evidence from the children to suggest 'they are alone in front of the Internet more than the parent believes.' From these findings, Tarrozzi concluded that children using the Net in Italy still represented a small group of 'pioneers' privileged with parental resources and supervision. Anxieties raised in relation to television such as passivity and excessive or solitary use were thus misplaced, at least for now. This was an opportunity, however, for both parents and teachers to work alongside children in exploring Cyberspace. Teachers, in particular, should not try to impose their own priorities on children's use of the Internet but allow them to find for themselves new ways of learning and organising knowledge.

The idea of children in the company of their elders was a running theme in the next contribution from **Dr Binod Agrawal**, President of the TALEEM Research Foundation in India. Entitled 'Under the Parents' Shadow', his talk focused on the fact that television is seen as essentially a family medium in India, with children seldom left alone to watch and their viewing tightly regulated by parents. He pointed out that although children constitute about 40 per cent of a population of 950 million and are found in 53 million television homes, less than one per cent of programming is devoted to them. Pressure for change on behalf of children has mainly come from outside agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO with an emphasis on educational priorities.



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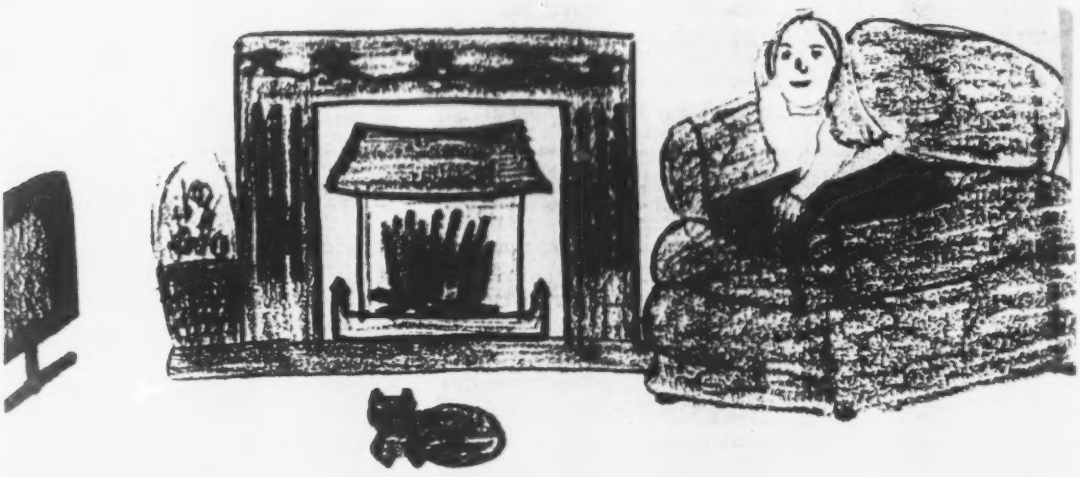

I'm Sat in the armchair by the fire with my cat Gizmo watching television.

Dr Sonia Livingstone's research project encouraged children to draw their impressions of the media

More recently, foreign commercial interests have stepped in to tap the market for children's entertainment, particularly in the form of cartoons.

Contrary to common perceptions about television, Agrawal reported that research has shown children to be avid viewers without adverse effect and that the role of television as an educational tool is widely acknowledged. Entertainment is also important, with more girls than boys watching television for this purpose. There are concerns, however, about the possible negative impact of television advertising, particularly on children from less privileged homes. Television viewing is largely treated as a cinema experience with noise, comments and conversations discouraged, although children may imitate song and dance sequences from the screen. In rural situations, it is even more of a community activity with 'the entire energy of the television owning family focused on orderly viewing.' With many children knowing more than one language, television has promoted the use of Hinglish, a combination of the predominant language, Hindu, and English.

Turning to interactive media, Agrawal explained that computer literacy programmes in some schools had provided evidence that children were able to acquire the necessary skills rapidly. However, access to such technology is extremely limited apart from a few affluent urban homes and, in his view, 'it is going to be a long time before interactive computers will begin to impinge on family television viewing in India.' Already characterised by wide social and economic disparity, India would soon be suffering from an ever-widening knowledge gap.

> ***'It is going to be a long time before interactive computers will begin to impinge on family television viewing in India.'***

The final speaker was **Dr Kathryn Montgomery**, co-founder and President of the Center for Media Education in Washington DC. Her aim was to demonstrate how the Center, a policy advocacy organisation,was working to ensure that the electronic media would serve the needs of children. It had made much use of research in the process, in terms of evaluating and support policies, presenting findings to parents and teachers and raising public awareness.

Closely involved in policy developments in the USA, Montgomery reported that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was just about to approve the parental guidelines system to be used in conjunction with an electronic blocking device, the V-chip, now mandated for inclusion in new television sets. Negotiations with the television industry had ensured that their ratings, based on age categories as for movies, should



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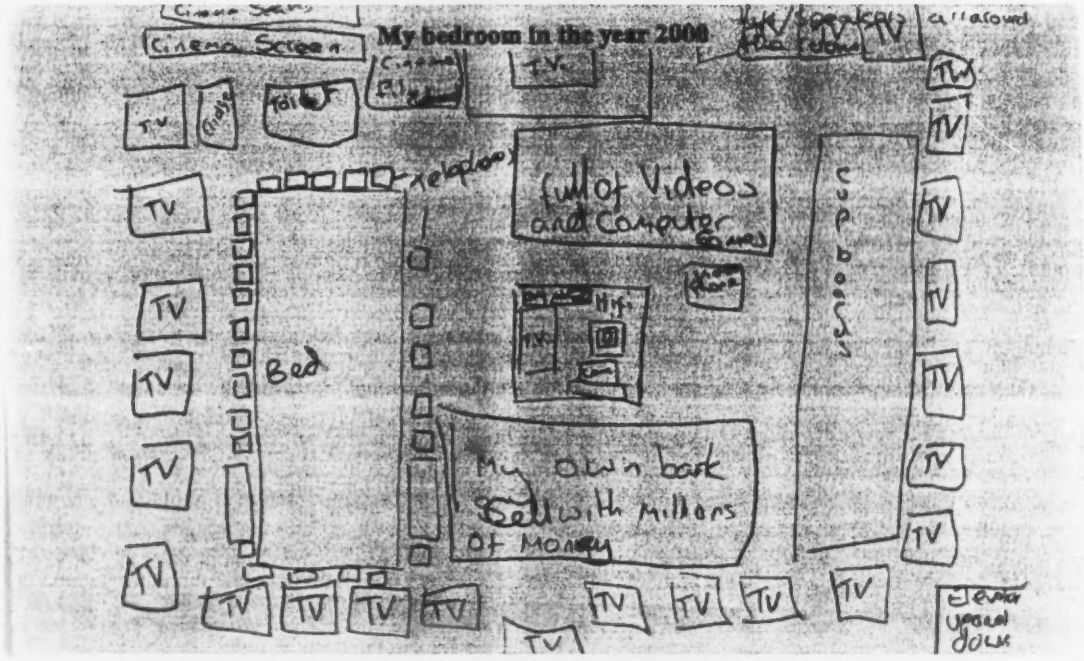


A more futuristic view from a ten-year-old boy.

also include content descriptors, one of which should be FV standing for 'fantasy violence in childrens' programming. Another area of involvement had been the requirement for educational and information programming stipulated as a licence condition by the Children's Television Act. Research undertaken by the Center for the FCC had confirmed that some television stations had been simply redefining entertainment programming as educational and steps had been taken to strengthen the rules.

Keen to generate discussion about the opportunities created by the digital age at its formative stage, the Center has developed its own agenda. This has included efforts to move the debate away from an over-emphasis on the protection of children to a more positive view of new developments. A major conference held in Washington in December 1997 was the first of several attempts at national dialogue on the subject. With recent data showing that 25 per cent of poor families did not even have a telephone, Montgomery feared that affordable access to the new communications infrastructure, what she called 'the central nervous system of society', would continue to be an issue, despite policy undertakings to supply schools and libraries with subsidised equipment.

She was also concerned that what promised to be an even more powerful force than television in children's lives should offer quality. With a blurring of the lines between advertising and editorial content on the Web, there was a danger that the new media would be much influenced, if not dominated, by marketing, with children viewed as the 'lucrative cyber-tot category' ripe for targeting. As marketing people invited children into 'branded environments' or into relationships with 'spokes characters' for different products, it was time to return to debates about separating advertising and programming previously heard in the television industry. The Center had sounded an early warning about these trends in its report entitled *Web of Deception*, a source already recommended by Congressman Edward J Markey. Similarly, in an era of increasingly personalised marketing with unprecedented opportunities for consumer data collection, the issue of privacy needed attention. Realising that the elimination of advertising was simply not practical politically or economically, the Center had called for early institution of rules to protect privacy on-line.

In the belief that research can contribute to the process of harnessing the power of new media to good effect, the Center has also set about developing dialogue between the academic community and the industry, health professionals and parents in order to identify best practices and to act as a clearing house for ongoing research. Excited by the opportunites ahead, Montgomery ended with a plea 'that we ensure at the outset, at the birth of this new medium, that we create what I call a healthy civic culture that will serve children not only as consumers but as citizens.'



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# brands or strands – internet programming for children

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|---|---|
| CHAIR | Franklin Getchell Getchell Intellectual, USA |
| SPEAKERS | Daniel Hillis Walt Disney, USA |
| | Paul Nichola Australian Children's Television Foundation |
| | Judy Gibbons Microsoft UK |
| PRODUCER | Andy Grumbridge Flextech, UK |

The aim of this session was to look at some of the programming being created for children on the Internet. If estimates are correct, said the chair **Franklin Getchell**, President of American media branding consultancy Getchell Intellectual, 20 million children will be using the Internet by the year 2000. What and who will drive the content? Given the wide range that will be available, how will children know where to find anything? And, with reference to the title of the session, will it be enough to create a really excellent site, or strand of sites, or will they need to be marketed by one of the giant brands?

First to speak, **Danny Hillis**, Vice President of Research and Development at the Walt Disney Company in the USA, chose not to talk about his own giant brand but instead to show the audience some material being produced by a small company from San Francisco called Animatrics. In his view, branding might well be important but it did not necessarily follow that established brands would automatically transfer to the Internet. He felt that television producers were too quick to assume that they were simply dealing with another new medium for which they could repackage their material, when in fact it was fundamentally different. Children, in particular, have made it clear that they are attracted to the Internet because it gives them more control and allows them to look into something more deeply. They now have the expectation that 'clicking' on an image will lead to something more that they can learn from, to the extent that a television appears to be 'broken' precisely because it cannot provide the same interactivity.

Animatrics' plan was to sell a subscription service which provided some on-line material supplemented by a CD-ROM. The excerpts from *Sprocket Works* demonstrated that the content had to provide for several ways of looking at a subject, whether it be classical music, practical craft or learning how an aeroplane works. Children were getting used to being able to stop and start material as they wished instead of passively being told a story, said Hillis. These examples showed that producers were no longer able to dictate terms and expect users to follow their agenda.

> ***'The underlying philosophies of* Kahootz *are to develop and create cultural exchange, to improve communication and literacy skills, encourage active learning processes and promote social interaction.'***

Disney, too, was at an experimental stage in this area. Whereas the natural inclination was to think of this kind of content as an add-on to other businesses, in the long run it should be thought of as something separate, with its own set of rules and content.

The emphasis of the second demonstration was on communication. **Paul Nichola**, Head of New Media for the Australian Children's Television Foundation, explained that the Foundation had expanded its charter two years before in order to deliver innovative television programming, including new media. Since then, it had created a website, established a service offering lesson plans for teachers using ACTF programming, and developed various interactive products such as *Lift Off*, *Round the Twist* and, his subject today, *Kahootz*. Due for launch in April 1998, this was being built in conjunction with Hewlett Packard and Telstra, a major telephone company.

Aimed at six- to 16-year-olds, *Kahootz* would be an adult-free zone where, for an annual subscription fee of Aus$50, members could communicate across the globe, sharing interests and activities in their own on-line universe. Acknowledging the ambitious scale of the project, Nichola described it as a 'self-sustaining community of kids who provide each other's entertainment, inspire one another and act together on collaborative ventures.' Intended to open children's eyes to the power of technology, 'the underlying philosophies of *Kahootz* are to develop and create cultural exchange, to improve communication and literacy skills, encourage active learning processes and promote social interaction.'



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The product combines CD-ROM technology with the Internet, allowing users to create messages or, in *Kahootz*-speak 'expressions', off-line, using a range of multimedia tools. These can then be 'published' and shared with other members as appropriate, each identified by the user's own icon, rather like a 'living website'. Members can fend off unwanted on-line encounters with a 'Zap', a self-regulatory tool which can block communication between selected icons. There is also a complaints procedure should things get really out of hand.

***'There's a huge number of things you can do which can build on the engagement created with the original broadcast.'***

As Nichola pointed out, one of the strengths of such a service was that it enabled members to jump straight into a closed community, rather than spending considerable time seeking out like-minded users, often with uncertain results. It also has the added advantage of broadband performance from a narrowband network, thus avoiding the usual frustrating delays. Above all, *Kahootz* would contain no advertising or merchandising and was not about promoting an existing brand.

The final speaker, **Judy Gibbons**, Director of On-line Services at Microsoft UK, was delighted that, after many false starts, convergence between computing, telecommunications and television was at last a reality in the form of WebTV. Launched in early 1997, this already has around a million subscribers, of which 300,000 were users, some of whom were on-line for up to 40 hours a week as opposed to PC users at about 15 hours. Research has shown that this audience is looking for both better television and better Internet content. Ideally, therefore, interactive television should be able to provide the best of both worlds.

Gibbons showed a video to demonstrate how WebTV Plus could enhance the viewing experience, offering viewers extra information on screen from the website without interrupting the continuity of a programme. TV Home and TV Listings could provide instant information on access to channels, programmes or on-line services such as the Internet and E-mail. Future upgrades would include a one-touch VCR record feature and the facility to send pictures and video clips via E-mail.

With children in mind, Gibbons envisaged the use of 'cross-over links' for extra information about a character in a drama or what to do with sticky-backed plastic in *Blue Peter* and chat rooms for viewers wanting to exchange views after a show: 'There's a huge number of things you can do which can build on the engagement created with the original broadcast.' Similarly, parents were being offered more information in order to guide their children's viewing. Interactive games with screen characters were another possibility, as were interactive toys such as Microsoft's Barney, already demonstrated earlier in the day. With the digital set-top box just around the corner offering greater computing power, together with the fact that PC penetration was already at 40 per cent in the USA, and the Internet not far behind, Gibbons predicted that people's living rooms would soon be very different places.

Discussion continued about the most likely direction that these developments would take. Certainly all were agreed that interactivity meant handing over control in a way unknown in traditional broadcasting. As Getchell observed from the tone of the debate, however, this still appeared to hold plenty of anxieties when it came to dealing with an audience of children.

***'An extremely full day and one that raised a great deal of questions about the future.'***

**Linda Khan** agent provocateur

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Anna Home
Chair, Second World Summit
on Television for Children

John Richmond
Channel 4 Schools, UK

day

# the future

into the next millennium

**the children's charter and beyond**

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# into the next millennium

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | |
| **SPEAKERS** | David Kleeman American Center for Children's Television<br>Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri Premier, Free State Province, South Africa<br>Dr Patricia Edgar Australian Children's Television Foundation<br>Carol Bellamy UNICEF<br>Lorraine Heggessey BBC, UK<br>Albert Schäfer Kinderkanal, Germany<br>Karen Flischel Nickelodeon International, UK |
| **PRODUCERS** | John Richmond Channel 4, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | YTV Canada Inc |

The task of the penultimate plenary session was to gaze into a crystal ball. Its chair, **David Kleeman**, Executive Director of the American Center for Children's Television, explained that the panel had been asked to look forward three years to anticipate what might have come about by the time of the next World Summit in 2001. Venturing a few hopes himself, such as that 'a child in India, whose village is getting television for the first time, will find a mirror on her own history and culture as well as a window to others', he told his audience that it was in fact they who controlled whether our best hopes or our worst fears were to be realised.

First, though, a brief extract from *Digikids*, produced by staff and students at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication in the UK, gave one version of what a child returning from a school day might experience even further into the future, in 2004. The students had talked to senior broadcasters, manufacturers and to children. The result was to Kleeman both worrying and exhilirating – a child whose homework and television schedule had been programmed by his parents and whose life appeared to be inextricably linked to the outpourings of his computer.

The first speaker, **Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri**, Premier of the Free State Province of South Africa, had been Chair of the South African Broadcasting Corporation at the time of the previous summit. Now, with an overtly political hat on, she talked of the democratisation that had occurred in certain regimes but also of the discovery that this comes with a price attached.

Acutely aware that the technological revolution could offer so much to those who could afford its wares, she feared that by 2004 there could well be even 'greater imbalances unless we do something between regions and between countries as well between the haves and the have-nots.' She felt that the challenge was for programme-makers and technology experts to see 'to what extent we can bring children into the world without in fact undermining their own sense of identity.'

Clearly chlidren's television was unlikely to be a priority of newly democratised governments, especially against the scale of other problems such as AIDS. There was a recognition, even from the Americans, however, that a free market could not address the needs of the majority of children in the world. The answer could lie in partnerships, both regional and international, between governments and private organisations, willing to accept their responsibility to produce quality material.

With issues such as the diversity of cultures, of origination and of ownership competing for attention, Matsepe-Casaburri felt that self-regulation was the best way forward in preference to inflexible legislation. There was, too, a need to discuss the impact of the the overarching protocols set by the International Telecommunications Union, something that should perhaps be considered at the next summit. In addition, she hoped for a 'greater articulation of the voice of developing countries through its participation both in the structures and the decision-making processes' for the next event. Finally, though, the most important aim was to further collaborative efforts on behalf of children, especially those in developing countries, in order to confirm their dignity.

Described as the 'mother' of the first World Summit and the 'doting aunt 'of this one, **Dr Patricia Edgar**, Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation, spoke next. Declaring herself to be more attuned to short-term goals than crystal ball gazing, she reflected on some unanticipated developments from the last few years. Controversy had moved from fears that *Power Rangers* might make children grow up to annihilate the world to worries about a programme featuring soft cuddly toys, for instance. Her own foundation had formed working links with Buena Vista in order to carry forward an Australian production in a way that she could never have predicted. Similarly she could not have foreseen the development of on-line children's services in the form of *Kahootz*, about to be launched worldwide. However, she still believed that people could create the future for children's television rather than having it defined for them.

Full of praise for this Second World Summit, Edgar gave credit to John Willis and John Richmond of Channel 4 who had been sufficiently inspired by the first event to commit funding for the next. For the future, she felt representation from South America, Asia, Africa and China should be extended and that the movement should bring together researchers and regulators as well as producers and broadcasters. She applauded the wider participation of delegates from the floor, but felt there had been less opportunity for 'social bonding', particularly among newcomers to the summit. She thanked those who had been prepared to attend despite criticism and the American representatives for being willing to engage in a debate about 'the one-way flow of information that so affects the smaller countries and the poorer countries. It's really important that the USA does understand that it's not simply a matter of the rest of us sharpening our game so that we're good enough to sell into the US market.' As for the role of children in the summit, she felt that it was important not only to hear their comments but to interpret them: 'When I hear that they don't want to watch violent programmes and they want to watch programmes from all countries around the world, I think we've got to think about just what that really means.'

**Carol Bellamy**, Executive Director of UNICEF, explained that her own organisation had recently been involved in much crystal ball gazing in order to form a vision of its activities for the next century against a background of increasing inequalities and disparities around the world. Having decided that its main aim should be to help bring about the universal realisation of child rights, the question was how the expanding power of television could be engaged on behalf of children. Her feeling was that, like UNICEF, those involved in developing programming for children should use the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as their guide, the most highly ratified international treaty lacking just two signatures – those of Somalia and the USA. She hoped that by the time of the next World Summit, all children should know of this convention and its implications. Her intention was that broadcasters around the world should be involved in workshops organised by UNICEF and endorsed by the International Council of the National Academcy for Television Arts and Sciences which would increase participants' understanding of the convention.

Turning to the opportunities provided by a changing broadcasting environment, Bellamy showed an extract from a film produced by UNICEF in conjunction with an animation company about a South Asian girl called Meena. Designed to highlight how a child might deal with problems of human rights, this series had involved input from over 10,000 children across South Asia. A similar approach had been adopted for another character, Sarah, who would be exploring issues facing adolescent girls in East Africa, and it was hoped that more would follow. She was aware, however, that such culturally relevant programming was expensive and could only be produced more widely through partnerships between industrialised and developing countries, though with enormous benefits to both.

***'There will be greater imbalances unless we do something between regions and between countries as well as between the haves and the have-nots.'***

Finally, the possibilities offered by new methods of communication were bound to have an impact in the next few years, for instance allowing children to interact with television through the Internet. Clearly, said Bellamy, children in developing countries would not have the same access to computers as those in richer countries, but they would have more opportunity to see television: 'It's the medium that children in rich and poor countries are most likely to have in common in the next century.' The role of broadcasters in 'making children creative, empowered individuals with a sense of belonging to their community and an understanding of their culture as well as that of others' was vital.

As Head of Children's Programmes at the BBC, **Lorraine Heggessey** had inherited a department which was the largest producer of children's programmes in the world. She felt that there was a boom in children's television, with competition likely to intensify and audiences fragment still further as digital broadcasting introduced the possibility of more children's channels. There were bound to be casualties, especially in the commercial sector where, as Adam Singer of Flextech had commented, 'Television is an economic activity before it is a creative activity.' Luckily, public service broadcasters could put creativity first in the belief that channels would not survive without strong content: 'Never in my broadcasting career has the licence fee and publicly funded television made as much sense as it does now that I'm involved in children's programming.'

The child audience was discerning and, as revealed in a new report published by the UK's Independent Television Commission, not satisfied with wall-to-wall cartoons. With more choice of media, children were turning to their computers at the expense of television, which they now considered old technology' according to recent BBC research.



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The BBC was already developing programme concepts exclusively for the Web as part of its service to the licence fee payer in the UK, but there could also be opportunities to do the same for children overseas. The advent of digital channels and on-line facilities brought with it the chance to adapt material so that it could reach more children and serve more purposes, educational and recreational. Even better, from Heggessey's point of view, would be a free digital children's channel, perhaps by the time of the next World Summit. Nearer at hand, there would be five-hour blocks of children's programming shown at the weekend on the BBC's first digital channel, Choice. She was aware, though, that all these advances would make the gap between rich and poor throughout the world even greater, 'for what I hope is a brief period'.

It was also important not to be bamboozled by the hype: 'Old or new, media always needs good writers, performers and producers.... the consumer will home in on quality programming and no amount of delivery systems will change that.' Amongst all the choice, Heggessey hoped the BBC would continue to be a trusted guide for parents and children alike but also a strong competitor: 'I'm aware of the important position we occupy a a beacon and an example for other children's programme providers at home and abroad.' To sum up, her personal wishes for 2001 were for a BBC digital children's channel delivered free, more original programming on all the main channels and a substantial in-house on-line production unit. 'Oh, and Anna will have become Dame Anna Home and will still be working as hard as ever on securing a future for children's television around the world.'

Next to speak was **Albert Schäfer**, Managing Director of Kinderkanal in Germany, who predicted that in 2001 there would be a lot more channels, both free and pay TV, targeted at children, and there would be a move to more interactivity. Competition between the global players would be greater and it would be unlikely that four or five children's channels could survive in any one country in Europe. Dubbing studios would have increased and the number of smaller domestic production companies reduced. Public service broadcasting would be under enormous pressure and in some cases struggling to survive.

Schäfer felt that parents would demand a responsible attitude from broadcasters as they became even less aware of what their children could obtain through their computer screens and would also be asking for more educational programming. As a counter to global product, children would want something that reflected their own social and cultural environment and here public service channels would be crucial. Although unlikely to grow, Kinderkanal would be an important competitor and its licence fee funding would keep diversity and quality alive. He was sure that some other public service channels would be established in Europe and that the EBU Youth Experts Group would be involved in co-productions and rights distribution. New media would be popular but the demand for good television drama would continue to be high. To conclude, scandal would hit this rather depressing scenario, with the installation of a virus that caused the Teletubbies to talk!

Finally, the chair introduced **Karen Flischel**, Managing Director of Nickelodeon International in the UK, and thanked Nickelodeon for its major sponsorship of the summit. To Flischel, 'working in kid's television means keeping up with kids' and not being afraid of change. If 'technology is what was invented after you were born', digital will not be new technology for children – 'It will be everyday as though it always existed.' Digital could bring several opportunities for children – empowerment, self-directed learning and control over the media environment, to the extent of being able to create their own personal network schedule and their own programmes. In fact, children would have to lead grown-ups to navigate this digital world and, as the older generation, 'We must engage, explore, discover and learn with our kids so that the quality of our relationships and connections with them does not diminish.'

***'We must engage, explore, discover and learn with our kids so that the quality of our relationships and connections with them does not diminish.'***

Flischel predicted that there would be more children's media of all kinds and more international collaboration. The convergence of television and computers would be particularly exciting for non-fiction and news programming, allowing for more personal involvement for children in order to pursue their interests. In order to keep up with the impact of this on children, it would be crucial to hear what they had to say, not just about their preferences but about their experience. 'The world is changing far too rapidly for us to reply on our memories of our own childhood or the child within each of us. Kids will often be our teachers, our instructors, our trainers, our mentors.'
It was also vital to identify young media professionals with a commitment to children and to nurture them: 'For Nickelodeon, everything we do will continue to revolve around our core relationship with kids. We succeed because we put them first and we look at the world from their point of view.'



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# the children's charter and beyond

The aim of this final session, said **Anna Home**, Chair of the Second World Summit and Chief Executive of the Children's Film and Television Foundation, was to pull together some of the impressions and thoughts that had emerged during a very full week. It began, however, with an audio-visual perspective called *Summit Up*, a kind of video diary from all the children involved, working together with Channel 4's *Wise Up* team, producer **Mick Robertson** and director **Zoe Dobson**.

In between putting adults on the spot with tricky questions about tamagochis and favourite cartoon characters, this gathered reactions to issues such as children's news, the V-chip and children's own programme preferences. Eminent panellists, producers and administrators had all been pressed for contributions, resulting in a lively impression of the Summit's preoccupations. After thanking the production team for all their hard work, Home explained that several delegates would now be making announcements and comments based on the week's events.

The first was from **Floella Benjamin**, television presenter and Vice Chairman of the British Academy of Film and Television and Chairman of the Children's Awards Committee. She explained that although BAFTA had given awards for children's programmes in two categories over many years, it had only established a children's awards ceremony in 1996. In order to recognise the worldwide talent evident in children's programming, however, it had been decided to present a new international award at the next ceremony in London on 18 October 1998.

**Gareth Grainger**, Deputy Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority, then outlined the progress made by the network of youth and media researchers which had first met informally at the Melbourne Summit. Since then, the French youth and media research organisation, GREM, chaired by Elizabeth O'Claire, had organised a forum in Paris in 1997 sponsored by UNESCO and attended by 400 researchers from 50 different countries. Now chair of the committee organising the next forum, Grainger announced that this would be held in Sydney in late November 2000, just after the Olympic Games. Anyone wanting futher details could contact him on gareth.grainger@aba.gov.au.

As a follow-up to the session on minority languages, Viva Vernacular!, **Meirion Davies**, Commissioning Editor for Children's Programmes at S4C, proposed an amendment to the final point of the original Children's Charter. This was to read 'Government production, distribution and funding organisations should recognise both the importance and vulnerability of indigenous children's television and take steps to support it and protect it, providing children's programming in minority languages' (see page 108).

Home then focused attention on the four regional forums that had been held during the week, one of the innovations of this World Summit. Although the intention had been good, she acknowledged that they had been short of time and that this would need to be remedied in future.

> ***'Most importantly, public television as an endangered species needs to be protected.'***

**Nadia Bulbulia** from the Independent Broadcasting Authority in South Africa, who had chaired the African Forum, spoke for delegates in the developing world. Their feeling was that the World Summit needed a fairer representation of people from every continent and sub-continent at all levels.

At board level, this would guarantee an airing of a wide range of concerns; at organisational level, this could promote the inclusion of issues relevant to the majority of the world's children; finally, at delegate level, this should ensure greater participation from the southern hemisphere through lower attendance fees and other costs. This would allow for a greater diversity of comment and perhaps a more practical approach to issues such as the 'dumping' of material or the monopoly of private broadcasters. It would mean putting into practice the principles of both the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the Children's Charter – in real terms, the fostering, financing and promotion of co-productions between north and south and between regions in the south and the creation of opportunities for exchange through internships and scholarships. It would also mean special funding and development aid for equipment and for research into the impact of television.

Bulbulia hoped there would be more opportunity for networking between producers and broadcasters at the next Summit to share both ideas and material and for open sessions to include a greater balance of views, including more from children. This in turn would open up possibilities for other producers to present and discuss their work. Putting a high priority on a regional approach, she felt that funding mechanisms should be developed in order to support post-Summit debriefings and preparation for future events. On issues such as regulation, for instance, regions needed to learn from one another in lobbying government as well as sharing internal concerns.



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The junior delegates read out their own charter during the final session.

She recommended that the planning team of the next World Summit should be fully representative of both the developed and developing world, as should the proposed World Summit Foundation. The aim should be to build bridges between different cultures, focusing on the positive aspects of globalisation. In this way, countries could both learn from each other's experiences and also work together to develop regulatory frameworks, protect the future of public television and require private broadcasters to refocus on delivering quality children's programming. She concluded by proposing that the Fourth World Summit, to include both radio and television, should be held in South America in 2004.

**Yassa al Houli**, President of the Educational Channels in Arab Radio and Television, then spoke about his own region and its relatively recent involvement in television, particularly by satellite. In the belief that Arab broadcasting had much to offer in terms of co-production possibilities, he proposed Cairo as a location for either the fourth or fifth summit.

Other contributions from the floor followed. There was a suggestion from **Danielle Lunenborg**, Head of the Children's Department at VPRO in The Netherlands, that Western broadcasters might look at ways of donating quality programming to developing countries. **Dr Ingrid Geretschlaeger**, a teacher trainer from Austria, hoped that more teachers might attend future summits and that training might be a topic. Still on the subject of media education, **John Pungente**, Chair of the Association for Media Literacy in Canada, announced that Summit 2000, subtitled Children, Youth and Media, would be taking place in Toronto.

**Dr Carla Seal-Wanner** from USA-based @ccess4 @ll suggested that, in order to embrace all the various ways in which children are now dealing with the digital age, the Third Summit should be 'for media' rather than just 'for television'.

The issue of inequality was raised by **Jerzy Moszkowicz**, President of the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ). He invited those interested to attend the General Assembly of his organisation in Oslo in October at which relationships between the developed and developing world would be the topic of a one-day seminar.

**Milton Chen**, Executive Director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation in the USA, proposed the first on-line summit. As he suggested, this would not only ensure that the content would be more widely available, but also make more constructive use of money currently spent on travel and accommodation. Taking up this point, **Michael Bongiovanni** of the European Children's Television Centre, organiser of the Third World Summit in Athens in 2001, said that the idea of an on-line debate about children's television had already begun. With preparations underway, it was possible for people to feed in information and comments through a service called Media Talks on Children (see page 128). Briefly, he explained that the approach to the next Summit would be based around the idea of a triangle, with the three points being the artist, assisted by the entrepreneur and seconded by the citizen. Two main topics would be convergence and trans-national collaboration, with a particular focus on developing countries.

Home then asked **Chris Grace**, Director of Animation at S4C in Wales, to provide an update on the funding situation for *The Animated Tales* co-production project. He explained that 20 countries had committed themselves to the venture by the time of the session on Wednesday, leaving him six countries short. Less than two days later, he could report that 15 more

countries were now negotiating for those six places. He was now confident that the series would happen, with the first 13 tales available in early 2000 and the remainder the following year. Taking into account satellite coverage, this could rise to 80, perhaps more, which would extend the series for several years. Grace had found that what he termed this 'fight back against cultural erosion' had struck a chord with many countries. In the process, he was having the time of his life working with partners from all over the world. Even better was the fact that any profits made would be fed back into the World Summit for use in future projects.

The floor was then opened for the junior delegates to give their own conclusions from their deliberations during the action-packed Children's Event. After a spoof preview of the 2015 Summit, presented with the help of children's producer **Ruth Wiseman** from HTV in the UK, the children read out their own charter to the audience (see page 112).

Announcing that the next Summit would be held in Athens, hosted by the European Children's Television Centre and Options Euro Congress, Home introduced two representatives from the Greek government, **Dimitris Reppas**, Minister of Press and Mass Media, and **Evagelos Veneselos**, Minister of Culture. Their message was that the Third World Summit would form part of the build-up to the cultural Olympiad 2004 which was being organised in the context of the 2004 Olympic Games.

In expressing his delight that Greece would organise the Summit, Reppas stressed his country's commitment to ensuring a balance between technological development and protection for children. This encompassed both avoidance of harmful programmes and encouragement of quality. The child is not only the adult of tomorrow, he said, but someone with interests and anxieties which need attention today from those charged with providing for the children's market. Indeed, such provision is more than a commercial activity because of its responsibility to reflect both world citizenship and cultural and linguistic identity in all its forms.

Veneselos spoke of what he considered to be the real agenda for the next Summit, the obligation on governments and the television industry to re-evaluate the potential of the ever-changing media in relation to children. Believing them to be the most important factor in shaping public opinion and providing a medium for education, he felt that the relationship with new technology should be dynamic and constructive. Of course there were concerns and problems associated with the huge advances in the audio-visual and information fields, but today's human beings were far more interesting than those of the pre-television culture.

> ***'I think particularly the voices of children have been salutary, inspiring and entertaining. We will continue to listen and learn from you.'***

It then remained for Home to bring proceedings to a close. Her own personal snapshot of the week confirmed the belief that those working in children's television walked a constant tightrope between extremes, those of free market and subsidy, regulation and censorship, child and parent, business and public service. Now there was another element, the new media, offering huge opportunities but also the dangers inherent in a two-tier society. Those living in the developed world should never forget how privileged they were. She was encouraged at the spirit of co-operation evident during the week, with people willing to come together for the common good of the child audience and even the powerful global companies seeming to be aware that they must respect local culture.

Excited by the idea of a World Summit Foundation, Home proposed that there should first be a feasibility study in order to decide upon the way forward. In her own view, the Foundation should act as a link between regional and world summits, monitoring initiatives that emerge such as the Children's Charter, which she felt should be formalised. There was also a need to become involved in lobbying on behalf of children's television and to create a programme development fund to support new local production.

Before thanking all the key people who had played their part in the Second World Summit, she remarked on the amount that had been learned from voices from all around the world: "I think particularly the voices of children have been salutary, inspiring and entertaining," she said. "We will continue to listen and learn from you."



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# activities

regional forums

**the children's television charter**

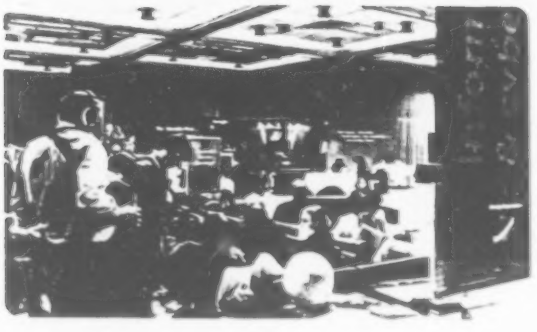
the children's event

**masterclasses**

screenings

**summit library**

summit updates and future events



# regional forums

## african forum

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Nadia Bulbulia Independent Broadcasting Authority, South Africa |
| **SPEAKERS** | Dr Tom Adaba Nigerian National Broadcasting Commission |
| | Eulalia Namai Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation |
| | Dr Fawzi Oussedik University of Blida, Algeria |
| | Govin Reddy SABC, South Africa |
| **PRODUCER** | Nadia Bulbulia Independent Broadcasting Authority, South Africa |
| **SPONSOR** | K-TV |

How can television address children in a continent of such diverse cultures, languages and economic development as Africa? As explained by the chair, **Nadia Bulbulia** from the Independent Broadcasting Authority in South Africa, this topic had already been tackled in an African summit in Ghana held in 1997, clips from which were shown to start the session. Commenting briefly on the fact that 'while the Western or developed world embraces the new media, we grapple with radio and television', she asked Tswaraganang Tshekedi, a young delegate from South Africa, to give his views. He, too, made the point that there needed to be more programmes about children made in African languages and based on African culture and images, especially for those aged between ten and 14.

Speaking for the West African region, **Dr Tom Adaba**, Director General of the Nigerian National Broadcasting Commission, explained that Nigeria now has 58 television stations and 37 radio stations. Despite this, a once thriving tradition for children's programme-making which had originated in the 1950s and been well supported financially for some 20 years, had more recently become the victim of both underfunded public broadcasting and what he called the 'the mindless mercantile approach of the newly licensed private stations' desperate to make a profit. 'Generally, children are receiving less than their fair share of television air time in the West African region,' he said. 'Most of what they do get is either condescending, culturally alienating or downright harmful. It has not always been so.' In particular he was alarmed at the way in which 'political legitimisation programmes, evangelism and cheap cast-offs from the American movie industry' were edging out not only children's material but other non-profit programming from the public airwaves.

There are some restraining factors, however, in both the public reaction to these developments and in the powers of the regulatory body to make a distinction between material suitable for the television screen and that which should be restricted to the cinema or video. In addition, there is now a conscious effort to stress the cultural needs of children, some examples being *Tales by Moonlight*, an enactment of old folk stories, and *Television 101* which children are able to present themselves. The way forward in all 12 West African countries, in his view, is for children's programming to be stipulated through the regulatory authority.

Second to speak was **Eulalia Namai**, Manager from the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation, who had been working in children's television since the 1970s. Focusing on the East African region which encompasses countries as diverse as Sudan and Mauritius, she stressed the lack of homogeneity even within a certain age group. Within one country, children in urban or rural areas might have totally different experiences. Access to television, too, varies enormously. While radio in Ethiopia is available in over 80 per cent of the country, television only covers 43 per cent, due to rise to 55 per cent in the near future. Similarly in Kenya, the television signal from the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation only covers 38 per cent of the country as compared to radio which reaches 98 per cent. As everywhere, budgetary constraints and commercial pressures affect quality and creativity, as does the problem of language; with over 70 languages to choose from in Kenya, it is difficult for children to participate in or appreciate programming not in their own language. While the radio manages to broadcast in 22 languages, Kenyan Television uses only English and Kiswahili.

Turning to new technology, Namai commented: 'We talk about the Internet, many of us, but we really don't know what it is, though we hope it will really be a good thing.' The current priority is to establish policies and a regulatory framework where there is none and to encourage more training and co-operation between countries in order to safeguard a sense of identity. The percentage of foreign programmes varies but in Kenya, at 70 per cent, is high, and likely to be exacerbated by the advent of multi-channel television now operating in several East African countries.



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**Dr Fawzi Oussedik** from the University of Blida in Algeria then spoke on behalf of the North African region, focusing mainly on the shortcomings of locally-made television for children. In his view, this leaves much to be desired in terms of content and production values, thus strengthening the attraction of even less suitable foreign imports. With Arabic programmes tending to be geared to the small educated market, they apparently make little effort to appeal to pre-school children or establish a real rapport with their audience. Without wishing to be too harsh in his judgement, Oussedik was also critical of the emphasis on fantasy and conflict which he felt failed to reflect the reality of children's everyday lives.

***'While the developed world embraces the new media, we grapple with radio and television.'***

**Nadia Bulbulia**
Independent Broadcasting Authority, South Africa

Finally **Govin Reddy**, Deputy Group Chief Executive of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and previously head of SABC Radio, began by appealing to the organisers of the next Summit to rectify the imbalance of representation from different areas of the world – at this event there were over 60 delegates from the USA and less than 30 from the 50 countries of Africa: 'It's not easy to fly 10,000 kilometres and speak for five minutes.' He reported that in 1995, 14 Southern African countries had adopted a regional children's broadcasting charter. In line with both the international Children's Charter and the African charter on children's broadcasting, this called for 'programming which reflects and affirms the identity of children in the region by portraying their culture, their language and their life experiences.'

To Reddy, though, the sticking point was that 'children who are raised on a diet of imported animated features reflecting Western culture, language and values will not nurture an identity which takes pride in their language and their culture.' The advent of new private channels had provided a 'lucrative opportunity' to increase audiences and advertising revenue with imported animation and music. In his view, the developmental needs of children meant that public and private broadcasters would have to work together to provide quality programming. The boom in new stations could be turned to good effect if the minimum local content quotas being set by the regulator, the Independent Broadcasting Authority, were observed.

According to these, SABC, for instance, would have to achieve 30 per cent of local content on all three channels, rising to 50 per cent within four years. And at least half of this children's programming would have to be educational. Despite declaring his confidence at fulfilling these quotas, Reddy highlighted the constraints affecting a company such as SABC, funded on a mix of licence fee and advertising income, especially when faced with a new commercial channel coming on air later in 1998. Dependent to a large extent on advertising income to top up the licence fee, he was well aware that advertisers were attracted by higher income groups rather than large audiences looking at local content.

Against this background, Reddy felt that co-production and export would be the long-term solution in order to deliver the objectives of the charter, though not forgetting the limited access to broadcasting services, in particular television, in various parts of Southern Africa. It was therefore just as important for broadcasters to ensure that children's programming was provided on community and public service radio.

# eastern european forum

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| **CHAIR** | Eugen Patriche Romanian Television |
| **SPEAKERS** | Eszter Farkas-Laki Hungarian Television |
| | Ruxandra Ion Abracadabra PROTV, Romania |
| | Andras Erkel VARGA, Hungary |
| | Jerzy Moszkowicz CIFEL Poland |
| **PRODUCER** | Eugen Patriche Romanian Television |

A small group of children from Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Bulgaria opened this session, predicting that they would be running the Summit by the year 2022. The chair, **Eugen Patriche**, Head of the Children's Department at Romanian Television, then provided some background information on the region under discussion. Central and Eastern Europe covers over 20 countries from the centre of Europe to the borders of Asia. Very different in terms of culture, they nevertheless share common problems, mainly because they have undergone a similar political destiny under Communism and are trying to bring about change. Open to ideas of development and collaboration, he stressed that they had not come to the Summit in search of money but as partners, offering their expertise and motivation.

In his view, the changes in the media environment have had a particular impact in a region such as Eastern Europe where commercial stations have multiplied and eroded the monopoly of public television. In addition to being very short of funds, the latter has lost many of its professionals to the private companies because of the higher salaries on offer. Despite this uncertain situation, children's television has continued its strong tradition based on the trinity of 'inform, educate, entertain' with the aim of producing quality programmes.

In fact, research has shown that there has been an increase in the quantity of children's programming on the part of the public broadcasters as a response to the commercial competition, although in some cases levels of foreign acquisition are high. Knowing that children appreciate home-grown product, producers need more money, possibly through joint ventures on a regional or international scale, in order to keep up with demand. Proposed legislation to enforce domestic quotas is meaningless if the finance is not available. Believing international support and co-operation to be the only way forward, Patriche described some projects supported by the European Centre for Children's Television (ECTC) such as *Bridges*, a 13-episode half-hour magazine show involving ten different countries over the last two years. He also mentioned two other projects currently looking for partners – a docu-drama using the idea of 'one day in the life of a child' and a children's news exchange.

Despite the inevitable financial competition, Patriche did not feel that the quality of content would suffer in the hands of private broadcasters. Perhaps more worrying was the struggle to keep a distinctive cultural identity. Above all, cross-border co-operation would be crucial.

The first speaker, **Eszter Farkas-Laki**, Editor-in-Chief of Children's and Youth Programming at Hungarian Television, told a similar story of increased competition and a struggle to survive on the part of a public broadcaster which had once enjoyed a monopoly position. Whereas for its first 20 years, the children's department had basked in official support, well funded and respected, everything had changed in 1990 with the end of the Communist era. Although provision of children's television as part of public service broadcasting was enshrined in the 1996 Media Act, it has undergone a constant struggle for funds. The corporation is now funded by a combination of licence fee and advertising, with children's programming suffering as a consequence. With onerous responsiblities to propagate national culture through a minimum amount of domestic programming, the department is nevertheless continuing to provide a range of genres, produced both in-house and through Hungarian independent producers. According to Farkas-Laki, however, they cannot hope to compete against an influx of new domestic and foreign channels and, without further support, audiences will continue to decline. 'If children's television doesn't get the attention and protection it deserves, as well as independent financing regardless of the corporation's financial situation, it will be unable to fulfil its role,' he concluded.

From the perspective of the private sector, **Ruxandra Ion**, General Manager of Abracadabra-PRO TV in Romania, also chose to talk about money. Having co-produced an award-winning documentary with very little financial support a few years ago, he had begun making entertainment programmes for



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commercial television, becoming the first independent production company in Romania to do so. In his view, quality programmes which promote national and moral values can make money – even when it came to children's news and magazine programmes. 'What we have to do is remember all the time that our main target is a kid and he deserves the best in the world,' he said. 'I do not want to be a hypocrite. Everyone nowadays needs to make money and we have the possibility to do this with professionalism.'

***'I think Western countries should look to Eastern Europe not just because of their cheap labour but because of their enormous talent.'***

**Andras Erkel**
Senior Director and Producer, VARGA, Hungary

Again from the private sector, **Andras Erkel**, Senior Director and Producer at the animation company Varga in Hungary, decided not to dwell on the difficulties of working in Eastern Europe but instead focused on talent. Having started their company nine years ago, at a time when Hungarian Television was virtually bankrupt, he and his colleagues knew that they had to find business partners in order to embark upon any projects. They had two assets to sell – labour that was cheaper than in other parts of Europe and talent, although at that time Eastern Europe had not built up a reputation for distinctive animation work.

In Erkel's view, it was largely thanks to S4C in Wales that this perception had changed. Having moved into animation, the Welsh channel had not been afraid to work with Eastern European organisations on projects such as the Shakespeare animations. The other bonus was that, as opposed to live-action films, animation tended to travel well. His own company had recently worked with both S4C and Channel 4 on another project, from which one film had been nominated for a British Animation Award and another had won the Best Computer 2-D Animation prize in Los Angeles. Clearly persuaded that this type of work presented an exciting opportunity for Eastern European broadcasters, he encouraged his colleagues to sell their own fairy tales to the Summit's own *Animated Tales* project being developed during the week (see report on page 61). 'I think Western countries should look to Eastern Europe not just because of their cheap labour but because of their enormous talent.'

The final panellist, **Jerzy Moszkowicz**, President of the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ) in Poland, spoke about the possibilities for co-operation between the countries of Eastern Europe. Although he was obviously delighted at the changes brought about by the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, he nevertheless acknowledged that there had been some beneficial aspects to working relationships between countries in the region, in spite of rather than because of the tight structures within which they operated.

Severed by the political changes at the time, these relationships could be fostered again he felt, now that they were all having to deal with the same 'troublesome heritage': 'Why not attempt to recreate our corporation, but now it should be free and unlimited.' In his view, this was an opportunity to establish a real market between countries previously linked by what he called a 'degenerated system'.

This idea had been already taken forward in the form of a meeting in February supported by UNESCO, his own organisation CIFEJ, the European Centre of Children's Television (ECTC) and Eureka Audio Visual. Held in Posnan in Poland, this was attended by eight broadcasters from Belorussia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldovia, Poland and Romania, and the Romanian independent production company Abracadabra. From this had come the plan to build on the existing Balkan and Mediterranean network founded by the ECTC in 1995 in order to create an Eastern and Central European Children and Young People's Television Network.

The participants had found much to share at the meeting, not least the need to make children's programmes that would reflect their identity in a region fraught with so much change. There were many questions still to be addressed. For instance, were their stations becoming more like those in the West? Was this a good thing for children's television? And how could they produce valuable and competitive programmes?

Moszkowicz was optimistic, however, that with more support, the network could have something important to say to children around the world.

The forum closed with two further brief contributions from **Andrei Menshikov**, Head of ROST, the Children's Programme Division of RTR in Russia, and from **Boyan Radoykov**, a programme specialist from UNESCO. Radoykov endorsed the previous mention of his organisation's support for a collaborative approach in the region and expressed his belief in the importance of television as a tool to create greater awareness and knowledge among young people.



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# latin american forum

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| **CHAIR** | Tatiana Merlo-Flores Foundation for Educational Television, Argentina |
| **SPEAKERS** | Patrica Arriaga Channel 11, Mexico |
| | Valerio Fuenzalida Chilean National Television |
| | Beth Carmona TV Cultura, Brazil |
| **PRODUCERS** | Tatiana Merlo-Flores Foundation for Educational Television, Argentina |
| | Beth Carmona TV Cultura, Brazil |

'Paradise' for children's programme-makers was how the forum's chair, **Tatiana Merlo-Flores**, Board Member of the Foundation for Educational Television in Argentina, described Latin America to her audience. The region may consist of over 33 countries, but two languages – Spanish and Portuguese – predominate, making it easier to sell programmes widely. Children form a majority of a population of nearly 500 million and most people have access to television. Cable is not so widespread, with some countries having none while Argentina, with 60 per cent coverage, has the third highest cable penetration worldwide.

**Patricia Arriaga**, Director of Children's Programmes for Channel 11 of Mexico Public Television, explained that commercial television, and in particular Televisa of Mexico and TV Globo of Brazil, is dominant in Latin America. As one of the largest Spanish programme producers in the world, Televisa now acts as a conduit for discussion between Latin America and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Asian countries. According to Arriaga, this has resulted in the exchange of programmes and ideas and the first-ever meeting between programme producers across Latin America. Held in November 1997, this attracted representatives from 19 organisations in 12 countries across the region.

She reported that the three-day meeting had included examples of programme exchange with Europe and Asia and of the range of children's programming now available within Latin America. Although there are many differences in style, focus and content, said Arriaga, the common use of Spanish made it quite possible to exchange programmes within the region. However, varying production values between countries meant that it was not always feasible to market them to the outside world. Arriaga explained that it was agreed to create an organisation to facilitate the distribution of programmes to a wider market and to pursue a five-point plan:

1. to increase and improve programmes for children and infants within Latin America
2. to develop the production and co-production of children's programmes
3. to promote professional training within Latin America
4. to improve reperesentation of Latin American producers at international fairs and forums on children's programmes
5. to establish a network for the exchange of information

A follow-up meeting to take these matters forward is planned for October 1998.

Next to speak was **Valerio Fuenzalida**, Head of Qualitative Research for Chilean National Television, who focused on the findings of recent research into children's viewing habits. This indicated two main trends, the first showing an increase in the number of children of all ages watching soap operas shown at 8pm, to the extent that they have overtaken the adult audience for these programmes and prefer them to those made for their own age group. Secondly, they are also spending a great deal of time watching a number of other adult programmes such as talk shows, thrillers and documentaries relating to social problems.

According to Fuenzalida, qualititative research had found that children see soaps as a way of finding out about the adult world and of sharing entertainment with older members of the family. Similarly, they are keen to learn about the social problems dealt with in these and other programmes. This trend also pointed to television's role as an educator beyond the school syllabus with its presentation of real-life situations to the audience in a palatable form. Recognising that both viewers' interests and the television environment is changing, Fuenzalida felt that, as broadcasters,

'We should accept this new reality and take responsibility for providing a wider menu.'

Television's influence is equally pervasive in Brazil where, according to **Beth Carmona**, Programming Director of the public broadcaster TV Cultura, 'children spend more time in front of a television set than in a classroom.' Thirty per cent of the country's population are children, a significant number of whom are not attending school. With 85 per cent of homes having at least one television set, TV Cultura has chosen to focus particular attention on children, winning several international awards in its 30 years of existence.

Carmona cited its adaptation of *Sesame Street* in collaboration with the commercial broadcaster TV Globo and the Children's Television Workshop in the USA as an early example of TV Cultura's use of television as an educator. It now transmits around eight hours of shows for children and teenagers daily, competing successfully with several commercial broadcasters in primetime slots – a historic feat for a public broadcaster, commented Carmona. Pride of place goes to *Ra-Tim-Bum Castle*, a Brazilian series which has been on air for three years and has been licensed to Nick Latino, the Latin-American channel of Nickelodeon, ensuring it a much wider audience in the region.

***'Brazilian children spend more time in front of a television set than in a classroom.'***

**Beth Carmona**
Programming Director, TV Cultura, Brazil

# asian forum

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| CHAIR | Feny de los Angeles-Bautista<br>Philippine Children's Television Foundation |
| SPEAKERS | Dr Anura Goonasekera<br>Asian Media Communication and Information Centre |
| | Yu Peixia China Central Television |
| | Bu Wei Chinese Academy of Social Sciences |
| | Muhammad Jahangir<br>Centre for Developmental Communication, Bangladesh |
| PRODUCER | Feny de los Angeles-Bautista<br>Philippine Children's Television Foundation |

**Feny de los Angeles-Bautista**, Executive Director of the Philippine Children's Television Foundation, opened the forum by explaining that the intention was not to try to represent the whole of Asia but rather to focus on a few case studies that had not arisen during the rest of the week. She also made reference to the 1996 Asian Summit on Child Rights in the Media held in Manila and attended by 300 participants from 20 countries, which had passed an Asian declaration on Child Rights adopting the principles of the Children's Charter. Two aspects had been particularly important. Firstly, the involvement of several government ministers, in order to raise awareness of the issues at a senior level. Secondly, the participation of children. Media workshops on different subjects had been held in several countries ahead of the Asian Summit, with children's comments made into a video for use at the start of the relevant session. Those children who took part in the summit itself came up with a 'wish list' which, according to de los Angeles-Bautista, was gratifyingly close to the adult's Charter.

After a short sample of Asian children's programmes, first to speak was **Dr Anura Goonasekera**, Head of Research of the Asian Media Communication and Information Centre (AMIC) in Singapore, previously Director General of National Television in Sri Lanka and Secretary of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. He gave an overview of research carried out by his organisation which had tried to ascertain the availability and accessiblity of children's programmes in different parts of this massive region and to what extent policy-makers and programme-makers were aware of the importance of children's rights.

***'We have poor Asia and rich Asia, but all Asian countries are trying equally hard to connect up to new technologies.'***

**Dr Anura Goonasekera**
Head of Research, Asian Media Communication and Information Centre, Singapore

Typically, children under the age of 15 make up between 35 and 40 per cent of the population in many Asian countries, even more in poorer countries. As Goonasekera explained, there are at least two Asias, in terms of the richer countries such as Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, and those at the other end of the scale such as India, Sri Lanka, Laos and Afghanistan. Access to television therefore varies widely, with about six sets per 1,000 people in Bangladesh, per 200 in Singapore and per 416 in South Korea. Ironically, however, most countries, rich and poor, are eager to invest in new communications technologies in the belief that this will bring them prosperity. Here again, the figures are widely disparate, with Malaysia investing US$16.2 billion as opposed to US$1.8 billion from Sri Lanka.

From a survey of programme categories available for children, it was clear that both animation and foreign imports tended to predominate, even in two situations as different as those in India and Malaysia. Whereas India has an 'open skies' policy allowing an influx of foreign channels such as Star TV, CNN and BBC World, plus the rebroadcasting of some of their own programming via satellite, Malaysia takes a much more restrictive approach. Citizens there have only recently been allowed to have satellite dishes, but even now these are only big enough to receive material which has been filtered by the national satellite, M-Sat.

As Goonasekera pointed out, however, this availability did not necessarily mean that people were watching these programmes. In fact, research had found that viewership of locally-made programmes in these countries was quite high compared to that for foreign programmes. It also found that children were often otherwise occupied in the afternoons when many programmes were targeted at them and that, in many



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cases, they preferred to watch adult programmes anyway.

Finally, he commented on the relative awareness of children's rights in Asian countries. In China this was high, with producers trying to incorporate the topic into their programmes while, at the other extreme, there was little awareness in Nepal.

Next to speak was **Yu Peixia**, Director of the Children's and Youth Department of China Central Television, who explained that 1998 was the 40th anniversary of China's television industry and of the first children's programmes. CCTV has eight channels, currently watched by over a billion people, two of which together broadcast around eight hours of children's programmes daily for a potential audience of 300 million youngsters. The prime channel, CCTV-1, regularly transmits five programmes, the most popular being *Big Windmill*, a magazine show for children between three and 12 shown seven days a week which includes cartoons, drama, documentaries and game shows. According to Peixia, latest reports indicate that this is reaching 99 per cent of its target audience and 93 per cent of parents. Other programmes include the daily *Cartoon City*, twice-weekly *Children's Theatre*, the weekly *New Line of Start for teenagers* and the weekly *Studio 12* for over-18s.

Peixia reported that around half of its children's programes are produced by CCTV itself, 40 per cent are co-produced and the other 10 per cent acquired from domestic and international broadcasters, the latter mainly animation from world classics or science fiction. CCTV has worked with over 100 different local television stations and production companies to co-produce everything from dramatised fairy tales to science programmes. Having had a successful partnership with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian company Southern Star Pacific Partners to make the 52-part puppet series *The Magic Mountain*, which has had substantial overseas sales, Peixia hoped that the future would bring further international co-operation.

Also from China, **Bu Wei**, Associate Professor of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Director of the Research Centre for Media and Children, talked about children's use of the media. By contrast with most other countries worldwide, she felt that Chinese children watched too little television because of other pressures on their time. Only 25 per cent watched television every day, and 35 per cent once or twice a week. They are beginning to use new media, however, especially since the promotion of computer education in 1993. According to CCTV, she said, 12 per cent of children play video games and 21 per cent use computers. The latter have proved particularly popular with children and their use, together with that of the Internet, has grown rapidly in the last few years.

Parents' attitudes towards their children's use of the media were clearly influential. Research carried out in 1996 had indicated that education was a high priority, with parents feeling that the entertainment provided by television and video games was detrimental whereas computers were a necessary tool. Wei was dismayed by this, believing that children were being denied their rightful share of recreational activities.

The final speaker, **Muhammad Jahangir**, Executive Director of the Centre for Developmental Communication in Bangladesh, also based his short talk on research figures. These had been gathered in 1993 by the Press Institute of Bangladesh against a background of growing concern about the impact of television on children. Around 460 children between the ages of seven and 16 had been interviewed, 96 per cent of whom stated that they watched television for fun, though 23 per cent also mentioned educational reasons. Most children spent between one and two hours daily watching television. English series (82.5%), drama (79.7%), entertainment magazines (67.9%) and children's programmes including cartoons (62.1%) were way ahead of other categories such as education (22.2%) in terms of popularity. Among foreign programmes, detective and adventure stories rated mugh higher (72.6%) than comedy (53.2%) or cartoons (31.7%). Inspiration drawn from foreign programmes included a desire to fight (54.5%), punish bad men (34.5%) and go abroad (30.6%). Of the sample, 77 per cent claimed that they wanted to be like an actor or actress from a foreign series.

A brief closing discussion centred around the economics of animation and the potential for co-operation between production companies in the region.

# the children's television charter

1 *Children should have programmes of high quality which are made specifically for them, and which do not exploit them. These programmes, in addition to entertaining, should allow children to develop physically, mentally and socially to their fullest potential.*

2 *Children should hear, see and express themselves, their culture, their languages and their life experiences, through television programmes which affirm their sense of self, community and place.*

3 *Children's programmes should promote an awareness and appreciation of other cultures in parallel with the child's own cultural background.*

4 *Children's programmes should be wide-ranging in genre and content, but should not include gratuitous scenes of violence and sex.*

5 *Children's programmes should be aired in regular slots at times when children are available to view, and/or distributed via other widely accessible media or technologies.*

6 *Sufficient funds must be available to make these programmes to the highest possible standards.*

7 *Governments, production, distribution and funding organisations should recognise both the importance and vulnerability of indigenous children's television and take steps to support and protect it, providing children's programming in minority languages.**



* The Children's Television Charter, drafted at the First World Summit in 1995, was amended at the Second World Summit to include 'minority languages'

In the lead-up to the Second World Summit, the organisers decided to commission some research into how the Charter had been put to use since its establishment at the First World Summit in 1995. A self-completion questionnaire was sent to all 520 delegates at the Melbourne Summit in October 1997 and results on the 21 per cent response were tabulated in February 1998. This work was undertaken by **Vicky Thompson**, Bazal Productions, and **Laura Wendt**, Head of Research and Development at Nickelodeon International.

In summary, this survey found that the Children's Charter has been widely endorsed by the attendees of the 1995 World Summit with signatories in 38 countries. Seventy-one per cent of respondents felt that it had contributed to the success of the first event and 86 per cent predicted that it would prove significant at future summits. It has been translated into several languages including Finnish, Swedish, Dutch and Japanese and been reprinted in a number of publications.

The Charter has been used in a number of ways around the world. 45 per cent of respondents said they had referred to it as a checklist against which they could assess how well they were addressing the needs of their audience. 54 per cent reported that it had influenced programme policy and 20 per cent commented on its relevance for developing company policy. It had been used in government funding decisions (34%), to evaluate television licence applications (12%) and in some cases as the founding principles for legislation, as with the Children's Television Act in the Philippines. There were suggestions that acknowledgement could be made to 'Charter-friendly' programmes made by endorsees and reports that the Charter had formed the basis of community awareness exercises, lectures and media workshops.

Alongside these positive outcomes, the survey highlighted a continuing uncertainty about the Charter's status and implementation. Although in strong agreement with its directives, some people were unclear as to who in their organisation should be the signatory and whether the Charter's main use should be personal, corporate or governmental. They were keen to publicise their endorsement of the Charter (69% had done so within their organisation and 31% within the industry) but only 23 per cent had advertised this to a wider community.

Respondents were well aware (71%) that the Charter's full potential could only be realised through further promotion: 'The Charter is an excellent tool to have, but I doubt that one can force anyone into applying it. It will do a lot of good only if one continues to hammer the essentials into whatever available head.' Despite some resistance to the idea of a centralised administrative body, there was recognition that such an organisation could monitor endorsement and application of the Charter and thus increase its impact worldwide. There were suggestions for training to give media practitioners ideas on how to forward the aims of the Charter and adapt its use for widely varying cultural situations.

Based on these findings, it was recommended that a monitoring system should be established and guidelines developed to ensure that the Charter's message and possible applications are more widely understood. Above all, it was felt necessary to encourage further discussion about the Charter and the ways in which it could help to provide a better television service for children. As one respondent commented, 'The Children's Charter should be promoted continuously by everybody who cares about the future life of children.'

# the children's event

An innovative element of the Second World Summit was the involvement throughout the week of 31 international junior delegates aged between nine and 14. Selected from a large number of nominations with the help of the Summit's regional committees, they came from 15 countries representing many areas of the world including Australia, North and South America, Africa and Europe. From a variety of backgrounds, some had extensive experience within the world of television; others were simply enthusiastic viewers.

The children devoted most of their time to producing four sessions to which the adult delegates were invited. Although the themes had been chosen by the Summit committee with an adult facilitator assigned to each topic, the format and content of each session – whether masterclass, debate or short play – were entirely determined by the children. They had been able to contribute ideas to the website in advance of the Summit, but had not met before and had to work quickly, pooling their diverse knowledge and interest and overcoming language barriers. Each session included impromptu questions from a formidable array of inquisitors from the broadcasting industry. The children responded well, growing in confidence as they clarified their own views and began to realise that their ideas and opinions were being taken seriously. The experience of being asked to express their thoughts in front of an audience of professionals was new to many of them and most were having to cope with a second language and a range of different accents. Their comments are displayed throughout this report.

In addition, the children manned an information centre sponsored by The Britt Allcroft Company plc. Adult delegates brought videos, books and marketing material to be evaluated by the children and sought their views on programme ideas. This was also a favourite location for media interviews with the children. The junior delegates contributed to some of the adult sessions, as well as following a programme of daily outings to television, puppet and animation studios and film and television museums. Any remaining spare time was spent with artist Lynn Parroti, who encouraged them to express their ideas in visual form, or on visits to the cyber lounge and screenings.

**Kitty Ann** and **Roberta Kurtz**
Children's Event Co-ordinators

## pay attention when I am talking to you

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| **CHAIR** | Susanne Curran Director, TVYP Festival |
| **SPONSOR** | McDonald's Restaurants |

Most junior delegates had arrived with videos of their favourite and least favourite television programmes. These were compiled into a clip reel on which the children voted, from which a further compilation was made of the best and worst shows as a basis for discussion.

Working to a tight deadline, the children had developed a series of sketches for the masterclass, highlighting some of their views. 'There's so much choice,' said one, 'I just can't make up my mind. We've got access to so many channels we can flip forever.' Another group listed some of their complaints: too American; poor local programmes; bad scheduling; too many commercials; too unrealistic ('I want to see the real stuff, the ugly, fat, poor people'); too much violence in children's cartoons; not enough subtitles. Then they gave their vision of the future on the Fantasy 2000 channel featuring the 'multi-coloured friends show' on which commercials and censorship had run riot.

This was followed by an animated question and answer session, covering topics as diverse as shows for teens, multi-culturalism, the role of television in children's lives and competition between broadcasters. As one child remarked: 'They expect the ratings to go up but they don't even listen to what we want to see.' Peer pressure was clearly a factor: 'If you miss a programme you become the outcast for the day.' Agreeing with this, another child felt that 'We are spending too much time watching TV, discussing TV, when there are so many other things we can discuss.' Finally, the junior delegates listed their messages to broadcasters – everything from the need to listen to children's views to a plea for more variety.



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## don't talk to me like that

**CHAIR** Sarah McCrumm radio broadcaster, UK

This session looked at how to interview children effectively by learning from them. Having been involved in interviewing children herself for some ten years, **Sarah McCrumm** explained that she had always sought advice from children about what she had done right or wrong.

The junior delegates recounted several bad experiences with interviews, some of which had occurred during the Summit itself. The interviewer had ailed to listen or pick up on the answers or, as interviewees, they had felt pressurised into saying certain things which they didn't want to say. Even worse was being asked irrelevant or intrusive questions: 'Stick to the subject', admonished one.

To illustrate these points, an adult member of the audience volunteered to carry out a mock interview with Sally, a junior delegate from Australia. She spent some minutes asking Sally about violence on television, teasing out her viewing preferences and how she felt broadcasters should deal with such material.

Sally was then asked how she had found the interview: 'I think it was good. The questions were quite interesting and stretched my mind a lot.'

Although most of the other delegates agreed with this assessment, there were a few more negative comments. Some children found the interviewing style slightly slow or irritating; others thought the interviewer herself was nervous. On the whole, though, they liked the fact that she obviously respected her interviewee.

Speaking from her own experience, McCrumm suggested that a better quality of interview could be gained from talking to a group of young people together. As well as ensuring a greater mix of views, the fact that the power balance is in their favour gives children more confidence to say what they really feel. Discussion moved on to other issues. Were girls more willing to give their views than boys? Was it better for children to interview each other rather than adults interviewing children? And did children feel they could say things that adults wouldn't want to hear? 'I think you should say what you feel even if it'll get you in trouble,' advised one.

McCrumm observed that, to her, there was one crucial difference between the way in which adults and children approach an interview. 'Adults have a tendency to think that they can wear a hat and use it as a mask. Children tend to come to whatever they're doing as a whole person.' In conclusion, she suspected that some of the worst culprits had not felt it necessary to come to the session: 'The people who do most interviewing of children always think they know how to do it already.'

## kids are people too – the children's charter

**CHAIR** Mary Brenneman
producer of News for Kids, Brenmary Productions, Denver, Colorado, USA

**Mary Brenneman** explained that a small group of junior delegates had been working intensively over the last couple of days on their own charter on electronic media (see next page). Representing children of all nations and ages, their contention was that some broadcasters did not seem to respect their views. They had particularly strong feelings about excessive violence ('by that we mean violence just for the sake of violence'), exploitative programming and the lack of realism in children's television ('We want all children to see someone like them on television'). The aim of the session was to share their proposed charter with an adult audience and to ask for advice on how it could be implemented around the world.

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Violence was a recurring theme in the discussion that followed. 'If children say they don't like violence, why is *Power Rangers* among the highest rating programmes?' asked one bemused adult. 'Lots of action' was the answer, although this didn't have to include violence to be attractive. Indeed, there was a strong suspicion on the part of the children that violence was used to secure high ratings. 'Why can't they get high ratings in a different way?' was a challenge to programme-makers frequently given by the junior delegates. They expressed worries about violence being promoted as an easy answer to problems by characters who could be seen as role models.

After some lively debate about the dearth of programmes for teenagers and whether children were watching too much television (see comments on pages 23 and 39), attention turned to ways in which the junior delegates could ensure that their charter reached the appropriate people. A wide circulation to broadcasters, teachers and governments was suggested, perhaps with recipients being required to sign and return the document. Alternatively it could replace the Charter which had been written by adults, an idea which was greeted warmly by junior delegates. Support for the children's arguments was heartfelt, as expressed by a children's writer in the audience: 'We choose to work in children's television. Everything you're saying, we've totally agreed with. We have the same frustrations that you have.' There was clearly a hope that the efforts of all concerned could be taken forward.

1 Children's opinions about television and radio should be listened to and respected.

2 Children should be consulted and involved in the production of programmes for children. Sometimes children can help make programmes.

3 Children should have programming that includes music, sports, drama, documentaries, news and comedy.

4 Children should have programmes from their own country as well as programmes from other countries.

5 Children's programmes should be fun, entertaining, educational, interactive and should help them to develop physically and mentally.

6 Children's programmes should be honest and real. Children need to know the truth about what is going on in their world.

7 Children of all ages should have programmes created just for them, and the programmes should be on at times when children can watch them.

8 Children's television should discourage using drugs, cigarettes and alcohol.

9 Children should be able to watch shows without commercials during the programmes.

10 Children's television should have presenters that respect children and don't talk down to them.

11 Violence for the sake of violence or violence to solve conflict should not be promoted.

12 Television producers need to make sure that all children, including children who have difficulties seeing and hearing, are able to see and hear all of the programmes for children. Programmes should be translated into the language of the country in which they are seen.

13 All children should be able to hear and see their own language and culture on television.

14 All children should be treated equally on television. This includes ages, races, disabilities and abilities, and all physical appearances.

15 Every broadcast organisation should have children advising them about children's programmes, issues and rights in television.



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## when I grow up

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Kathleen McDonnell playwright and author of *Kid Culture*, Canada |
| **SPONSOR** | Scholastic Productions |

What kinds of programmes will children see in the future? The final masterclass opened with a satire written, produced and performed by the junior delegates, complete with costumes and stage set made during the week. Called *BK4K (By Kids for Kids)*, it was set in 2015 and featured a news show about the Seventh World Summit, run by children, to which adults had been invited. Now that all children's television was run by children, they were wreaking their revenge on adults and treating them in the same disrespectful way in which they felt they had previously been treated. A lively discussion ranged from the globalisation of television and the positive possibilities for learning about other cultures through interactivity to the power of humour to educate as well as entertain. Their list of current television favourites (see next page) included everything from *The Simpsons* to *Friends*. Concluding comments from the children made it clear that they had enjoyed their role in the Summit and found it worthwhile – as long as adults were listening to what they had to say.

## junior delegates

Sara Isabel Araujo Jodao
(11) Cascais, Portugal

Carson Arthur
(10) Cambridge, England

Matthew Barker
(13) Nottingham, England

Tamar Ben Ami
(13) Herzelia, Israel

Kostas Diminakis
(14) Salonica, Greece

Fergus Fairmichael
(12) Belfast, Northern Ireland

Ivy Farquhar-McDonnell
(9) Toronto, Canada

Emyr James
(11) Cardiff, Wales

Simon Hancock
(11) Plymouth, England

Tina Heath
(12) Brighton, England

Jonathan Hirsh
(10) Toronto, Canada

Donna Kelly
(11) Edinburgh, Scotland

Megan Kiernan
(11) Colorado, USA

Dylan Kurtz
(11) London, England

Katarzyna Luczewski
(13) Poznan, Poland

Stephan Mandic-Radcevic
(13) Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Maria Agustina Marcenaro
(13) Buenos Aires, Argentina

Erin May
(11) Colorado, USA

Dexter O'Neill
(13) Coventry, England

Alex Osborne
(11) Sussex, England

Sally Osborne
(12) New South Wales, Australia

Onur Ozcan
(13) Bakirkby, Turkey

Andrea Petrovski
(14) Skopje, Macedonia

Sherma Polidore
(11) London, England

Abigail Palmer
(12) London, England

Silje Robertsen
(12) Ski, Norway

Alexander Tomov
(12) Sofia, Bulgaria

Tshwaraganang Tshekedi
(14) Johannesburg, South Africa

Jillian Whitelaw
(11) St Helens, England

Andria Zenios
(13) Nicosia, Cyprus

Ivona Zurovac
(13) Sarajevo, Bosnia

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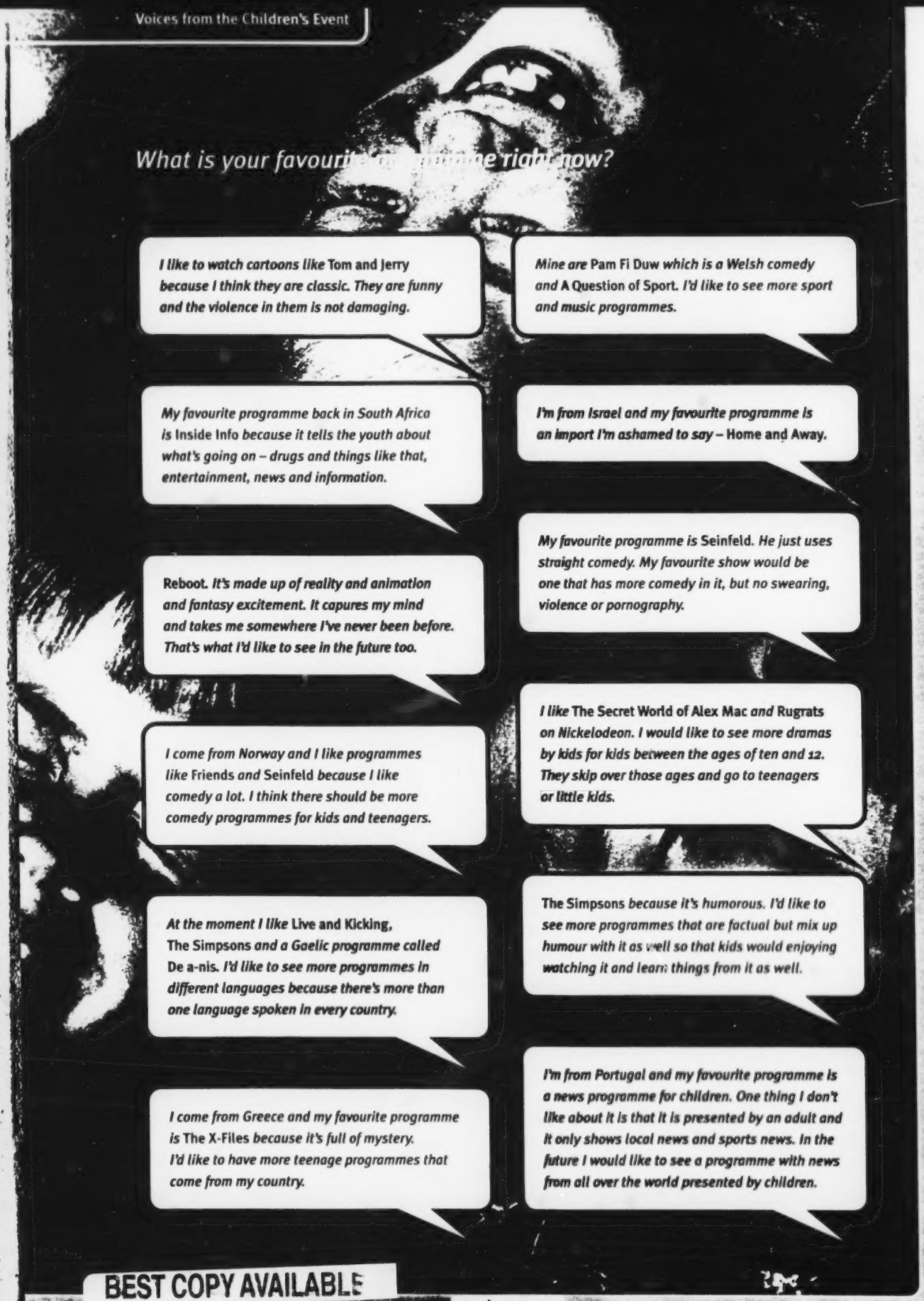

## What is your favourite programme right now?

*I like to watch cartoons like* Tom and Jerry *because I think they are classic. They are funny and the violence in them is not damaging.*

*Mine are* Pam Fi Duw *which is a Welsh comedy and* A Question of Sport. *I'd like to see more sport and music programmes.*

*My favourite programme back in South Africa is* Inside Info *because it tells the youth about what's going on – drugs and things like that, entertainment, news and information.*

*I'm from Israel and my favourite programme is an import I'm ashamed to say –* Home and Away.

Reboot. *It's made up of reality and animation and fantasy excitement. It capures my mind and takes me somewhere I've never been before. That's what I'd like to see in the future too.*

*My favourite programme is* Seinfeld. *He just uses straight comedy. My favourite show would be one that has more comedy in it, but no swearing, violence or pornography.*

*I come from Norway and I like programmes like* Friends *and* Seinfeld *because I like comedy a lot. I think there should be more comedy programmes for kids and teenagers.*

*I like* The Secret World of Alex Mac *and* Rugrats *on Nickelodeon. I would like to see more dramas by kids for kids between the ages of ten and 12. They skip over those ages and go to teenagers or little kids.*

*At the moment I like* Live and Kicking, The Simpsons *and a Gaelic programme called* De a-nis. *I'd like to see more programmes in different languages because there's more than one language spoken in every country.*

The Simpsons *because it's humorous. I'd like to see more programmes that are factual but mix up humour with it as well so that kids would enjoying watching it and learn things from it as well.*

*I come from Greece and my favourite programme is* The X-Files *because it's full of mystery. I'd like to have more teenage programmes that come from my country.*

*I'm from Portugal and my favourite programme is a news programme for children. One thing I don't like about it is that it is presented by an adult and it only shows local news and sports news. In the future I would like to see a programme with news from all over the world presented by children.*

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# masterclasses

Another successful innovation at the Second World Summit was a series of 17 masterclasses which ran over the first four days of the event in parallel with the main sessions. These provided a unique and valuable opportunity to meet and learn from pioneering experts from around the world.

The masterclasses spanned most genres of programming across the age range – from drama to animation and from factual to entertainment – and were organised in broad themes: production, craft skills and business issues. They also took on a wide and imaginative variety of formats, including lively demonstrations, illustrated talks, panel and audience discussions, workshops and even an interactive game show and simulation.

All were fascinating and many were highly entertaining. Some were so popular that there was standing room only. Above all, they provided the chance for delegates to share experiences, acquire information and participate actively in a more informal setting.

**Eric Rowan**
Executive Producer, Masterclasses

masterclass 1

## telling it like it is: tv presenting for children

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTER** | Dave Benson Phillips<br>TV presenter, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Bronwen Andrews<br>Disney Channel, UK |

Based on his own extensive experience as a presenter of British children's shows such as *Nick Jr*, *Go For It* and *Get Your Own Back*, **Dave Benson Phillips** ran a lively session in which he set out the main guidelines for effective presenting to children, summarising them as follows:

**1** The more comfortable you are with yourself, the more confident you look on camera.

**2** When talking to camera look into the middle of the lens and have as much eye contact as possible.

**3** Learn as much as you can about the subject you are about to present.

**4** Know your limitations. Don't pretend you can ride a horse or fight with swords if you can't.

**5** Be yourself. You don't necessarily need to act. Children and adults can see through that.

**6** Always have your target audience in mind. When you get your scripts always think of what type of person will be watching this particular programme.

**7** Do not patronise the children, do not talk down to them. They don't like it and they will act up.

**8** Maintain a good level of energy throughout the shoot and take care not to get stressed.

**9** Keep your mind focused on the job.

**10** Don't let your ego become bigger than your waistline. Everybody on the job is very important. You're just a cog in a wheel.

He also had the following 'Ten Commandments' for producers and directors of children's programes:

**1** When meeting the child or the children for the first time, take time to learn their names.

**2** Make sure the children's parents and guardians are not too far away from the set. Some children, even older children, get so shy they need to focus on somebody they know.

**3** Make sure the film crew are at ease with the children and ask them to refrain from using bad language.

**4** Take time to find out what the child is like by talking to them before the filming starts. If they are shy, just let them get used to the surroundings. If they're nervous, tell them exactly what is going on and have their parent or guardian just standing by. If they're confident, make sure that you check on their behaviour.

**5** Without being cold or condescending, show the children that you're in charge from the word go.

**6** Take time to explain to the children exactly what they have to do. Rehearse them a little bit and just tell them what's going on.

**7** Don't be afraid to ask the children if they need to go to the bathroom. Chances are they will be too afraid to ask you.

**8** Keep filming rehearsals to a minimum and save the performance for the real thing.

**9** Children tend to be very good in the first two takes. Three you're pushing it. Any more and you are really asking for a miracle.

**10** Between takes, take the child away from the set to relax in a room with their parents or guardians and have some games to keep them amused.

masterclass 2

## producing animation programmes for children: get the idea right before the techniques take over

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTER** | Michael Rose<br>Head of Development, Aardman Animations, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Lesley Oakden<br>Tyne Tees Television, UK |

Known worldwide as the creators of *Wallace & Gromit*, Aardman Animations has grown from a kitchen-table operation started by Peter Lord and David Sproxton in the mid-1970s to a studio of 50 permanent staff and up to 150 freelance crew just over 20 years later. **Michael Rose** gave a brief outline of the company's history from its first work with Morph for Tony Hart's *Vision On* for deaf children to Nick Park's more recent Oscar-winning films, delighting his audience with a liberal dose of clips.

He explained that the studio had supplemented its television work with lucrative commercial-making, enabling it to develop techniques for use in its own films. Sometimes it has happened the other way round, with Park's film *Creature Comforts* spawning a set of electricity commercials. Above all, though, the company has focused on getting the idea right at the outset, mostly using 3-D plasticine characters with their trademark wide mouths. Describing the process whereby an animator can make three seconds of film each day, he recalled that *The Wrong Trousers* took 14 months to produce and *A Close Shave*, with a larger team, ten months at a cost of £1.3 million. The company is currently working on its first feature film – an escape movie starring chickens set in the 1950s – and a series about four dogs called *Rex the Runt*.

Throughout his talk Rose stressed the studio's tendency to develop ideas internally, mainly because this led to strong ownership and involvement. Although merchandise for *Wallace & Gromit* – now running at 500 items – was obviously an important factor for future investment, the creative potential of a concept had to be pre-eminent. 'Aardman is magnificently indulgent,' he concluded. 'Our real motto is to try to follow the talent and ideas.'

masterclass 3

## directing children, directing for children – the work of Andrzej Maleszka

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTERS** | Jerzy Moszkowicz<br>President, CIFEJ, Poland |
| | Lewis Rudd<br>Senior Executive Producer for Young People's and Children's Programmes, Carlton Television, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Bronwen Andrews<br>Disney Channel, UK |

Unable to attend the Summit himself, **Andrzej Maleszka's** presentation took the form of a video in which he described his work with children and showed several clips.

Renowned for his rapport with the child actors in his films, Maleszka explained how he tends to use the same children repeatedly because he has come to know the way in which they behave. His constant aim is to achieve authenticity in front of the camera, not by spying on children with a hidden camera to achieve some spurious 'spontaneity', but by helping them to understand and share his goals. This approach makes him particularly suspicious of the dubbing process which, in his view, may take away the truth of a child's performance. Explaining that his preference is for silent film or for those that experiment with other forms of communication, he showed an example in which a child had taught her family cat language (*Kitten*) and another in which exaggerated movement was used to convey meaning (*Tower of Babel*).

Dismissive of the artificiality of official auditions, Maleszka prefers to visit young children in their natural environment such as in school, where he can see them acting as normal individuals. Games and improvisation form an important part of the selection process, followed by workshops to prepare those chosen for the alien pressures of the film set and the subject matter of the film. This often means that the script evolves from these early rehearsals, supporting Maleszka's belief that 'dialogue should complement events, not replace it' and that children's most natural form of expression is movement. He seeks the same authenticity in terms of environment, wanting his child actors to feel familiar with their surroundings and the props they will use, and uses synch sound recorded on location rather than post-synchronisation.

His adult actors are also regulars, ensuring that there is a close and protective family atmosphere during filming. Again, his priority is for people that are entirely natural in their interaction with children rather than those who hide behind learned gestures.

Admitting that he had previously made mistakes in thinking that he always knew better or that children had all the right answers, Maleszka explained his belief that children operate in two dimensions. Whereas the surface fashions and preferences of a child may change quite frequently, his feeling is that deeper emotions change much more slowly. To him, a child, a 'plainly wonderful' being, thrives on a mixture of these two aspects.

Regretting that he had only been able to talk to his audience and not listen, Maleszka concluded the masterclass with two more excerpts: *Blue Rose*, in which a little girl grows a rose out of the top of her head, and a film featuring a giant globe lumbering through the Polish countryside.

masterclass 4

## production funding

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTER** | Neil Court<br>Partner, Decode Entertainment, UK |
| **PANELLISTS** | David Ferguson<br>Senior Vice President, CINAR UK |
| | Raymond Thompson<br>Group Chief Executive, Cloud 9, UK |
| | Elias Kyriakakis<br>European Children's Television Centre, Greece |
| **PRODUCER** | Michael Carrington<br>BBC, UK |
| **SPONSORS** | CLT-UFA International and Cloud 9 |

Having identified four different types of production funding – pre-sales, co-production, private finance and public finance or subsidies – **Neil Court** wondered to what extent the situation had got tougher for producers. **David Ferguson** felt that it had, both because of greater fragmentation in the industry and increased competition, especially in an area such as pre-schools programmes. From the perspective of a Canadian company, co-production was inevitable for most shows.

**Raymond Thompson** focused on the example of the Enid Blyton series made by his company Cloud 9 in partnership with CLT-UFA International, confirming that selling ideas needed tremendous persistence and single-mindedness. Nevertheless, he felt that 'chaos brings opportunity' and that there were a large number of funding sources available if you were prepared to dedicate time to pursuing them.

**Elias Kyriakakis** described the website initiated by the European Children's Television Centre (www.ectc.com.gr) which consists of a catalogue of children's programmes available throughout Europe, complete with one-minute excerpts. Acting as a multi-media database, this is a resource for hard-pressed producers and buyers, particularly from smaller countries, who are bemused by the proliferation of product. The ECTC collects listings itself and also takes submissions from producers.

Discussion centred around the point at which, if ever, funding became easier and the merits or otherwise of limiting numbers of partners. A general rule of thumb suggested by Neil Court was as follows: 'The work done in the country should equal its investment in the production', the danger being that otherwise it became inefficient to chase partners for money and for approval during the production process.

masterclass 5

## writing for children: where were you when the page was blank?

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTER** | Gillian Reynolds<br>writer and broadcaster, UK |
| **PANELLISTS** | Marie-Anne Dudko<br>Director of Educational Research and Development, Lyrik Studios, USA |
| | Malorie Blackman<br>children's writer, UK |
| | Helen Cresswell<br>children's writer, UK |
| | Trevor Todd<br>children's writer, Australia |
| **PRODUCERS** | James Mason<br>British Writers' Guild |
| | Roger Singleton-Turner<br>freelance producer/director, UK |

What are producers looking for in scripts for children? Is there something specific about good writing for children? **Gillian Reynolds** pressed producers and writers to come up with an answer.



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Some thought that the script was central; others that both a good eye and ear were essential in making judgements. Strong ideas and characters were necessary, as was the ability to capture children's imagination. Book-based productions were obviously popular and could lead children to reading, but the potential of oral culture should not be forgotten. The importance of engaging children emotionally through the use of character and suspense was also thought to be crucial to success.

Partnership with writers was advocated, as was the idea of having a writer on an in-house team with access to audience research and continual feedback. The opportunities provided by team writing were also explored.

After a lively discussion, Vicky Ireland from the Polka Theatre for Children in London had the difficult task of providing a summary:

**1** What do we want from a writer? Ideas was the answer, some of which are followed through by one writer, others worked on by a team. Adaptation is a skill in its own right and specialist writers are also needed. Above all, writers should be in touch with children: 'Lots of people are quite frightened of children. I would persuade writers, go away and find children all over again. Don't be frightened, go and talk to them, be with them, you'll learn such a lot.'

**2** Pay attention to the craft of writing, the music of a script, there are slow passages, there are fast passages: 'It's very important to find that music so that you relish the good and exciting parts.'

**3** Writers need support: 'Create a situation around your writers where they feel wanted. Don't just leave them out on their own.'

**4** Three things that pertain to all children that we can write about: hopes, dreams and fears. Create empathy and reflect society. 'No matter what big issues we tackle, I think we should finish up saying "Life is worth living".'

**5** Help invest in writers to create new classics rather than relying on the old ones. And finally, when it comes to finding a place for drama in the schedules, 'I'm not creating work for children because they're going to be adults; I'm working for children because I believe in the state of childhood. I think we should all go back and tell our governments to jolly well wake up to the children around them.'

masterclass 6

## cartoon craft

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTERS** | Shilpa and Soumitra Ranade<br>Bombay, India |
| **PRODUCER** | Bronwen Andrews<br>Disney Channel, UK |

The term 'animation' tends to conjure up images of children's cartoons in the Disney tradition, even in India. According to **Shilpa** and **Somitra Ranade**, Indian animation has been strongly influenced by Disney through the presence of American animator instructors in the early years of its 50-year history: 'One cannot deny the contribution of Disney in perfecting the classical animation technique, character design and story-telling, yet along with the Disney technique came the added baggage of Disney images.' Thus this tradition became the reference point for all Indian animation, perpetuated by the more recent influx of foreign images, primarily from America.

In contrast, the Ranades are exploring ways in which rich indigenous sources can be used for storytelling in order to find a distinct recognisable personality for their own work. They showed three examples of this – firstly, *The Harvest*, a pictorial narrative based entirely on tribal painting. Rather like a comic strip storyboard, the tale unfolds as the camera reveals the different elements.

Secondly, *Mani's Dying*, based on part of a modern novel called *The Cocoon*, addresses Indian attitudes to suffering through a young man seeking solace in the Bhuddist cave monasteries at Agenta after his young sister's death. Echoing the book's approach, past and present are fused in the film's non-linear verbal and visual narrative.

In sharp contrast to the personal style of these two student projects, *The Childhood of Krishna* was commissioned by S4C in Wales for the series *World Faiths*. For the first time, the Ranades worked with a team of animators using computers, but were nevertheless encouraged by S4C's Chris Grace to retain an Indian feel. Sadly, in their eyes, this third film has gained greater acceptability with audiences more attuned to Western techniques.

Amazement was expressed that this kind of film, so appropriate for the Indian child audience, is not shown on mainstream television, partly because of the lack of suitable slots. There is a further irony in that Disney animation is referred to as 'realistic' while that of the Ranades is regarded as 'stylised', a description which they would refute. Although younger animators are interested in their work, power lies in the hands of the older 'classic' animators who are sufficiently well established to run training courses, thus perpetuating the existing style.

The Ranades also showed a clip from a five-minute film commissioned for Channel 4 called *Nadia Goes to School* which is currently in production. Based on the autiobiography of an untouchable who is striving to continuing her studies despite social attitudes, this will take them a year to complete because of the painstaking hand-painting involved.

masterclass 7

# producing drama programmes for children: getting the character from the page to the screen

| | |
|---|---|
| **SPEAKERS** | Patricia Lavoie<br>Vice President of Live Action Production, CINAR, Canada<br>Faith Isiakpere<br>independent producer, South Africa<br>Derek Barnes<br>casting director, UK<br>Jemima Roper and Marco Williamson<br>actors from *The Famous Five*, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Lesley Oakden<br>Tyne Tees Television, UK |

If compelling characters are the key to the success of a children's drama, casting is a crucial part of the process. **Patricia Lavoie** described a variety of casting experiences – the little boy Timmy in *Lassie*, the central character in *Emily of New Moon* by Lucy Montgomery, two adolescents on a cancer ward for a drama made in New Zealand and a PBS/NHK co-production needing Japanese actors from North America. A time-consuming business, it often cost more to find the right child because of the need to audition children with little previous experience. 'I think at some point it's just chemistry and instinct,' said Lavoie. 'You really feel a connection to the person and also what they can bring to the role.'

Having worked in both South Africa and England, independent producer **Faith Isiakpere** faced a different challenge – that of bringing races together for the first time and coping with the reactions of both children and their parents. His answer had been to begin by getting the children to play together in a workshop situation. Other projects had raised issues of how close drama should be to reality: 'I realised that I had to change my whole way of doing things. The only way I knew of doing that is to actually be close to some of the real stories and that's where we started.'

Acknowledging that 'judgement of talent is a very subjective thing', **Derek Barnes** described the process of getting to know the characters on the page, both from the original books as well as from the script, before giving detailed breakdowns to a range of sources including drama workshops, theatre schools and children's agents. His preference was for one-to-one interviews rather than big open auditions which made everyone nervous. Then the shortlisted children are recalled to a workshop, as with *The Famous Five*, in order to find a group of children who could work together on a 13-week series as a family. He also explained the importance of planning a production schedule to take account of the amount of hours children can work in the UK – 40 days a year for a child under 13, 80 days between 13 and 16.

**Jemima Roper** and **Marco Williamson** completed the picture by talking about their preparation for the roles in *The Famous Five*. Neither had attended stage school, but Williamson had gained quite wide experience starting with a local drama workshop and Roper had belonged to an agency. Both appreciated being able to talk through the character they wanted to play once they had done their own substantial research. Playing Julian, the eldest brother, with a personality rather different to his own, Willaimson felt that he had 'to take a step back. Playing a character that is not quite the same as you, you really have to look deep.' Roper had found it 'the biggest learning experience ever' working on a character whose personality was developing throughout the series. Admitting that some adults could be very difficult to work with because of their dismissive attitude towards children, she stressed the importance of receiving encouragement from the director: 'All actors are very very insecure and need constant reassurance.'

masterclass 8

# the importance of performance in puppeteering

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTERS** | Jamie Courtier and Julian Manning<br>Jim Henson's Creature Shop, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Bronwen Andrews<br>Disney Channel, UK |

Puppetry is a powerful force in storytelling. 'We've always had an undying love for the ideas that animals or toys or things have a secret life,' said **Jamie Courtier**. 'That they can speak to us, that they can become canvases to paint with human character and make us laugh at ourselves without noticing. Puppets have given us the means to make the ideas visible.'

As project supervisor, Courtier's role at the Jim Henson Company is to oversee work in progress, liaising with directors, producers and crews. His co-presenter, **Julian Manning**, runs the electronics department, responsible for the technical aspects of the creatures they create.

The Jim Henson Company has three sites: the headquarters and Creatures Shop in Los Angeles, the Muppet Workshop in New York and the Creature Shop in London. The legacy of *The Muppets* – 'incredible timing and performing skill' – remains their benchmark today. As Courtier explained, Henson was always determined to explore the frontiers of puppetry, bringing life to the creatures of our imagination in *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth* in the early 1980s. Instead of going to the obvious places for his special effects, however, he gathered together an eclectic mix of jewellers, furniture makers and industrial designers who shared his enthusiasm. The style at this time owed much to the Japanese sysem of rod puppeteering rather than more recent methods.

'It was a lovely technology of string and elastic bands that really worked almost even better than the most complex machined pieces of equipment we make nowadays.'

Gradually, 'animatronics', the fusion of technology and puppetry, began to take over as demand grew for ever-more-realistic facial expressions and lip sync and humans donned costumes to become puppets as in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. By the 1990s, the aim was to duplicate animals so faithfully that they could mingle with their real counterparts as in *Babe*, *101 Dalmations* and *Buddy*. At the end of the decade, puppetry encompasses everything from computer-controlled hydraulic robots to computer-generated graphics on screen, with technological wizardry blurring the definitions.

Manning then showed off puppets as diverse as the Muppets, Pinnochio and the horse from a German commercial for sauerkraut, regaling his audience with such 'behind the scenes' detail as the durability of foam skin and the nightmare of transporting puppets and their associated kit about the world. After much discussion of budgets, timescales and logistics, it was pointed out that, despite the technological possibilities, puppets didn't have to be phenomenally costly to be effective: 'It doesn't mean to say that a more expensive, more complicated puppet is best for a particular job. There will be times when the hand-held guy is the best possible puppet. There's always going to be a place for him,' they concluded.

masterclass 9

# producing game shows for children: can a game show format successfully travel from country to country?

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Andrew O'Connor<br>gameshow presenter and creator, UK |
| **PANELISTS** | Alastair Moffat<br>Managing Director, Scottish Television Enterprises |
| | Nadia Bulbulia<br>Independent Broadcasting Authority, South Africa |
| **PRODUCERS** | Elizabeth Partyka<br>Scottish Television Enterprises |
| | Lesley Oakden<br>Tyne Tees Television, UK |

With **Andrew O'Connor** in his familiar role as host, the panel took questions from the floor on issues ranging from the difference between game shows for adults and children to what makes a successful product in contrasting areas of the world.

The vast divide was clear from the outset when **Nadia Bulbulia** made the point that some of the traditional elements of children's shows such as games with water and paper had a rather different significance in South Africa: 'It doesn't work for these kids who have walked miles to collect the water. I think that there are cultural differences in the kinds of games shows we have.'

**Alastair Moffat** drew a distinction between the two main types of game show: the essentially sedentary question and answer show and the more physical show, likely to be suitable for a younger, fitter age group – *University Challenge* versus *Gladiators* or, in American terminology, 'hard' versus 'soft'. The possiblity of joining in at home in guessing answers contributes to the success of the first for adults, whereas children's shows often involve an off-screen element of qualifying heats.

New formats are scarce but there are different trends. Whereas America majors on reward-based shows, the Europeans, and particularly the French, have built on *Jeux sans Frontières* to develop more complex games such as *Fort Bayard*, *Treasure Hunt* and *Crystal Maze*.

Vital ingredients for success appeared to be a 'high concept' which would attract children to the purpose of the game, an appealing physical experience like a terror ride and an intelligent approach to having fun. Here again, people from less developed countries were concerned at the lack of educational content for children who, in their view, need more than simple entertainment to enhance their lives. They saw the revival of classic formats as 'lɪzy' when there had to be ways of inventing new shows around children's interests. Moffat had a different view: 'You can't run a kids' schedule where every programme has got some educational goal attached. They won't watch them, forget it.'

The dilemma was that, much to their parent's displeasure, children in developing countries enjoyed the material imported from the USA: 'A child now, if he has a television, is a universal child,' said Bulbulia. 'He likes the shows there more than what we can offer him.' Perhaps the trick was to learn from what America has to offer in making shows from a local perspective.



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masterclass 10

# the scheduling game

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | W Paterson Ferns<br>President and CEO,<br>Banff Television Festival, Canada |
| **PANELLISTS** | Christophe Erbes<br>Deputy Managing Director,<br>Nickelodeon, Germany<br>Roy Thompson<br>Head of Children's Commissioning,<br>BBC, UK<br>Mergan Moodley<br>CEO, K-TV, South Africa<br>Paula Parker<br>Director of Programmes, YTV, Canada |
| **PRODUCER** | Edward Pugh BBC |

As master of ceremonies, **Pat Ferns** introduced his four contestants in what was to be a highly entertaining gameshow for those not in the hot seat. All fired from their previous jobs, they were each running a speciality channel with a four-hour day part from 3pm to 7pm for four different age groups, pre-school 4-6, 7-9, 10-12 and 13-15. The challenge was to create a sample weekday schedule with a budget of US$50,000, while at the same time being innovative, competitive within the context of their own country and true to the ideals of the Children's Charter (see page 108). Having brought four of their own shows with them, they could then bid for more from a Top Ten list and acquire or commission programming.

After giving reasons for their choice of home-grown product, they then learnt how their bids for four of the Top Ten had fared. Revealingly, all four had bid for *Goosebumps*, *Rugrats* and *The Flintstones* with **Paula Parker** staking half her budget on *Goosebumps*. **Roy Thompson** won *Rugrats* for US$20,000 and **Christophe Erbes** paid US$10,000 for *The Flintstones*. **Mergan Moodley** had put US$20,000 up for *Teletubbies* for which its real-life commissioning editor had not risked a penny.

Tension mounted as the editors bid for the remaining programmes, juggling budgets, slots and target audiences at breakneck speed. All had to justify their choices, using the opportunity to explain their scheduling priorities to a demanding host and audience. Slick talking dealt with questions of innovation, competitiveness and adherence to the Charter, before the audience made its final judgement – equal amount of applause for each contestant's efforts. When it came to anticipating children's reactions, Ferns declared Erbes slightly ahead. His prize? The task of scheduling the next World Summit ...

masterclass 11

# television as teacher?

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTER** | Simon Fuller<br>Channel 4 Learning, UK |
| **CONTRIBUTORS** | Liz Nealon<br>Vice President, Production,<br>JP Kids, USA<br>Nicola Galombik<br>Head of Education, SABC,<br>South Africa<br>Sachiko Kodaira<br>Senior Researcher, NHK, Japan<br>Judith Tyrer<br>Producer, Science Programmes,<br>BBC Education Production, UK |
| **PRODUCERS** | Elizabeth Cleaver and<br>Kristin Mason BBC, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | JP Kids |

What makes a good educational television programme and how do you measure success? **Simon Fuller**'s aim was to find common ground between the experiences of four programme-makers working in very different environments.

**Liz Nealon** explained that there had tended to be a clear line between educational and entertainment programmes in the USA, but that with all channels now required to provide three hours of educational programming weekly, there was a sudden realisation that they didn't have to be boring: 'It's actually possible to do entertainment and education together without bringing the entertainment to a screaming halt when you get to the educational part.' Focusing on drama, her aim was to link learning to the plotline and seek out the 'emotional hot-spots' at which point children's attention is fully focused and their minds more receptive.

With South Africa's educational service on SABC only a year old, **Nicola Galombik** identified three main challenges: programmes must be curriculum-based and yet attract the audience at home as few schools have television; they must promote critical thinking rather than rote-learning; and they must contribute towards a restoration of the culture of learning. Her answer was to produce a live, interactive magazine format for teenagers which acts as a catalyst rather than a teacher, addressing teenagers in a holistic way and demonstrating the relevance of school activities.

NHK's programmes for older children are more likely to be watched in the classroom, but here again the idea is to activate their interest through relevant, up-to-date information. **Sachiko Kodaira** described how, in recent years, the presentation has become more relaxed with 'a general emphasis on encouraging children to other active self-learning by giving the impression that learning is fun.' Whereas programming for younger children includes entertaining elements, that for older children portrays more serious stories.

Finally **Judith Tyrer** explained her approach to the curriculum-based *Science in Action* which has gained significant success after one series both in terms of pupils' better understanding demonstrated through specific testing and in meeting a need for teachers. Presented from a vast underwater laboratory with a roving reporter out on location, the programme delivers science in an engaging way using puzzles, debate and drama.

Together with the audience, Fuller identified some common threads, among them clear aims, an understanding about genres attractive to children, flexible formats, humour and the ability to take an agenda and make it interesting. There clearly had to be a marriage of entertainment with education, but where should the line be drawn? In one producer's eyes, it was down to the response: 'If I can tell the broadcaster that a science programme married with entertainment has very good results in terms of an audience and an increased learning uptake, then I've won the case.'

masterclass 12

## around the world of sesame street – global local

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Cathy Chilco<br>Vice President for International Production, Children's Television Workshop, USA |
| **SPEAKERS** | Charlotte Cole<br>Vice President for International Research, Children's Television Workshop, USA<br>Ayman Elberduwil<br>Animation Producer, Quods Media, Palestinian Territories<br>Dolly Wolbrum<br>Executive Producer, Israel Educational TV, Israel |
| **PRODUCER** | Eric Rowan BBC |

Nearly 30 years old, *Sesame Street* has been seen in over 140 countries around the world and has been adapted into everything from a Mexican plaza to a Norwegian train station. For the last two years, its originators, the Children's Television Workshop, have been working on one of their most challenging co-productions, *Rechov Sumsum, Shara'a Simsim*, a series in Hebrew and Arabic in which Israeli and Palestinian puppets and actors visit each other's streets. Taking this as their case study, speakers from the USA, Israel and the Palestinian Territories provided a practical demonstration of cross-cultural television production at work.

**Cathy Chilco** and **Charlotte Cole** began by describing how the Children's Television Workshop sets about adapting its 'model of production' for use in an international context. First, educators in the countries concerned identify their curriculum goals as a framework for the production, each of which becomes the basis for segments in the show whether studio-based, animation or live action. Once scripts have been written and segments produced, these are then tested through a process of 'formative research' with local children, the results of which are fed back to the producers so that they can refine the material to make it as effective as possible.

In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian show, mutual respect was the critical issue, illustrated in episodes such as when the Israeli puppets, already familiar to viewers of the well-established Israeli *Sesame Street*, are invited to meet their counterparts on the Palestinian part of the street. Having not wanted to dwell on politics for an audience of children between three and six years old, the producers were nevertheless forced to adjust to real-life events during the production process, continually renewing their commitment against a background of ongoing conflict. With 65 episodes complete, **Dolly Wolbrum** reported that the series would begin transmission in April 1998 on Israeli television which covers Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinians will also have the chance to see some of the material on their local city stations, explained **Ayman Elberduwil**.

Chilco had opened the session by asking whether it was important to provide pre-school children with programmes that show their own culture, images and language. This met with a ringing endorsement from an audience clearly both moved and inspired by what they had seen and heard. In addition, however, the example of *Rechov Sumsum, Shara'a Simsim* had shown the value of finding ways to understand how others live and, in Chilco's words, 'appreciating similarities and differences'.

masterclass 13

## henry the four and a third – high quality on a low budget

| | |
|---|---|
| **PRESENTER** | Patrick Titley<br>Head of Children's Programmes, Yorkshire Television, UK |
| **PANELLISTS** | Sham Moodley<br>CEO, Prime Time International, South Africa<br>Airi Vilhunen<br>Head of Children's and Youth, TV1, Finland<br>Richard Callanan<br>producer, UK |
| **PRODUCER** | Patrick Titley<br>Yorkshire Television, UK |
| **SPONSOR** | Yorkshire Television |

Veering from the sublime to the eminently practical, this masterclass looked at the realities of trimming budgets for different types of programming – quiz shows, factual programmes and drama – through the eyes of three experienced producers.

As a parallel to the real-life challenges faced by the panel, chair **Patrick Titley** had scraped by on a miniscule budget to produce a video documenting the trials and tribulations of one Barry Blip, forever thwarted in his efforts to produce the ultimate *Henry V* by his executive producer Sam Shoon. Scripted by BAFTA award-winning children's writer Peter Corey, this told a familiar tale of a producer's wildest dreams crashing to earth along with his integrity.



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Having been allowed their own brief flights of fancy – a game show of international stars presented by Whoopi Goldberg, a history of film complete with classic clips set in Hollywood, and a drama with talking animals filmed in the Caribbean and the Med – the panel got down to business. As quiz producer with a budget between £300 and £600 per show, **Sham Moodley** would not compromise on presenter, concept or script, but would cut back on the set and graphics. With £500 a minute for her documentary on film, **Airi Vilhunen** would clearly have to scale down the clips and foreign travel but would focus on pre-production. **Richard Callanan**, having substituted puppets for animals and lost his glamorous young director and writer, had opted for experience: 'The director has to know everyone's job but only do his own.' The key as producer was to be knowledgeable and open about the budget, being particularly wary about escalating costs on post-production, and keeping an accountant and your executive producer on your side.

It emerged that costs could be cut in the simplest ways, such as limiting costume changes for quiz presenters, multiple shooting and small multi-tasking teams. Although there could be no compromise on a good script, it was felt that placing limits on a writer could sometimes enhance their creativity. Other areas could not risk skimping, however, such as thorough planning, research and an experienced crew. It was self-defeating to cut the size or expertise of the production team, for instance, if it then took them twice as long to achieve anything.

So was there a point at which a producer had to say: 'We just can't do it for that money'? For Callanan, the bottom line was sustainability: 'It's easy enough to cajole them to do favours for one production, but could you do it again the next year?' Moodley was unwilling to subsidise the client, knowing perfectly well that with more money they might go elsewhere next time. For Vilhuenen it was the viewers who counted and whether they would appreciate the finished product. In Barry Blip's case, all turned out well after all. A cable channel had come up with the money for Alan Shearer as Henry, Eric Cantona as The Dauphin and Barney as Catherine to make the major children's drama event of the century.

masterclass 14

## radio – sound pictures

**PRESENTERS**

Alan Lambert
BBC Education, UK

Jo Daykin
BBC Education, UK

Gordon Lamont
BBC Education, UK

Set up in response to enquiries from delegates as to whether there would be a chance to discuss radio issues, this masterclass was designed for participants to share experience and expertise.
In opening the session, **Alan Lambert** explained that BBC Radio had been making programmes for children throughout its existence of over 70 years but that there were times when it felt as though his own speciality, schools radio, was 'existing against the odds'. Moved around from channel to channel, and now limited to programmes for primary school-children aged between four and 11, this service is now transmitted during the night. With the introduction of a cassette distribution system two years ago, however, listening figures have risen and teachers are delighted to have what they consider a flexible and convenient service. 'Although there's a cultural thing in moving off daytime transmission and on to cassette – as broadcasters you feel a sense of loss – in terms of the audience it's been mainly beneficial,' he said.
Most programmes are accompanied by notes for teachers and further information available on a website.

Three clips demonstrated radio's versatility and ability to raise difficult issues: a news magazine about attitudes to disability, a story for very young children about name calling at school, and a drama about a child's accident. Although the latter was performed by children, the other excerpts used adult presenters and readers – a point which was queried by several participants. Time pressure and budgetary constraints made it difficult to involve children, explained Lambert, although he realised that programme-makers elsewhere might well hand over more of the production to children. For instance making programmes attractive to children becomes even more important in parts of the world where children do not go to school and where radio is their main source of information.

Led by **Jo Daykin**, discussion centred around some of the essential ingredients for issues-based programming: high production values, appropriateness and feedback from children.

**Gordon Lamont** then extolled the virtues of current developments in digital radio which will not only give listeners better quality but also the possibility of text information and even a mini-screen on their receivers. Further in the future, radio and computer could be used in tandem to download extra information during a programme or provide instant feedback from the audience.

As a way of pointing out that many of these facilities are already available, he asked for ideas about promoting health for young people, using a radio programme as the starting-point.
A wealth of suggestions included drama, magazine shows and phone-ins plus accompanying leaflets, a helpline and website information. As Lambert concluded, 'It's lovely to know that this old medium has a lot of life in it yet. It can get to a lot of people and be inspiring, imaginative and engaging.'

masterclass 15

# international programme exchanges

| | |
|---|---|
| **PANELLISTS** | Penny Spence<br>Executive Producer, European Broadcasting and Drama Exchange, EBU, Geneva<br>Richard Simkin<br>Ragdoll, UK<br>Michel Bongiovanni<br>ECTC, Greece<br>Rene Villanueva<br>Creative Director, Philippine Children's Television Foundation |
| **PRODUCERS** | Gillian Gordon<br>Film and General, UK<br>Penny Spence EBU |

Programme exchanges are a convivial way of reflecting and sharing the experiences of children in different countries, as **Penny Spence** explained. In her own case members of the European Broadcasting Union and associate members in Africa, America and Asia, have been contributing programmes to a drama exchange since the early 1980s. In return for producing an appropriate 15-minute drama targeted at children between the ages of six and nine, with a small amount of narration, a member broadcaster can use all or any of the other dramas in the exchange at no cost.

But how can such a programme retain its own cultural identity while appealing to children of other nationalities? Can quality control be maintained throughout the exchange? And do children really enjoy the products of such schemes?

**Richard Simkin** talked about the 'Open a Door' exchange run by the production company Ragdoll and supported by the BBC. This requires participants to contribute five-minute films without words, having first discussed whether the proposed subject matter will cross cultural boundaries – a precaution which proved its worth in the case of a storyboard from Zambia about children catching a mouse and burning it alive. At the opposite extreme, **Rene Villanueva** spoke about a Japanese suggestion for the ABU exchange that was turned down for being insufficiently Japanese.

Sensitivity to cultural difference is clearly a live issue for those organising and participating in programme exchanges. Some felt that participants had to be warned of subject matter to be avoided; some felt that no topic should be taboo if treated with care. Others felt it was down to an awareness that particular ideas simply did not travel well across borders.

Differences also emerged regarding the production values expected of participating broadcasters. While accepting the inevitable variation in resources, there was a feeling that there had to be an avoidance of compromise and mediocrity: 'I think if we want to keep these exchanges alive we have to insist on a very high standard,' said Spence. Ideally, contributors would want to use as many [illegible] possible to make participation worth their while and yet they had to be sure that they would succeed with audiences in an increasingly competitive environment. 'We put them to a very definite test,' explained **Lewis Rudd**, Senior Executive Producer at Carlton Television in the UK. 'We will not take part in an EBU drama exchange if these programmes are going to be failures for us.'

masterclass 16

# producing magazine programmes for children – what are the secret ingredients of the best magazine programmes for children?

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|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Gareth Jones<br>presenter, UK |
| **SPEAKERS** | Oliver Macfarlane<br>Editor, *Blue Peter*, BBC, UK<br>Annika de Ruvo<br>Producer,Sveriges Television, Sweden<br>Irene Gruzite<br>Director, Latvian Television |
| **PRODUCER** | Lesley Oakden<br>Tyne Tees Television, UK |

In its 40th year, *Blue Peter* still attracts the lion's share of the whole children's audience in its thrice-weekly 5.10pm slot and regularly features in the children's Top 10 programmes, despite growing competition from new channels. So how has it remained the BBC's flagship children's magazine show?

**Oliver Macfarlane** felt much is down to the presenters, selected for their natural ability to engage with the audience, complement each other and get involved in every aspect of a show which operates to a demanding schedule. Another factor is careful targeting to an audience aged between six to seven and 12 – the key viewers are eight-, nine- and ten-year-olds – with whom the programme has a strong relationship through its Blue Peter badge award system for contributors and a busy correspondence unit. Having moved to three transmissions a week a few years ago, Macfarlane sees the Friday edition as a chance to attract the older end of the age group with more bands and a contemporary feel, but otherwise he has



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retained the fluid format of four or five items in a 25-minute show which has worked so well.

The philosophy of not underestimating the child audience was shared by **Annika de Ruvo**, who has been producing *The Brain Office*, a weekly science show, for the last four years. Although aimed at a similar age group, this is screened at 6.30pm, a popular time for children's programmes in Sweden, and is achieving sizeable ratings. Among her goals, de Ruvo lists the promotion of science as an interesting topic for both girls and boys. Convinced that curiosity is infectious, she selects presenters and reporters for their own commitment to a subject often considered difficult for a young audience. The programme includes regular problem-solving segments and answers for questions from viewers provided both on and off screen.

In a very different situation, **Irene Gruzite** has similarly been able to build upon the latent interests of her audience. With the new free-market economy having overturned traditional attitudes in Latvia, the mass media are seen to have a key role in informing and guiding children. Griste's approach was to make an open invitation to her target audience, children between ten and 12, to come up with their own ideas for programme content. Conscious that she must cater for vast differences between urban and rural life and for a large part of the population still unfamiliar with the Latvian language, she has nevertheless been able to let children express their own ideas and experiences.

masterclass 17

# distribution

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAIR** | Ken Faier<br>Publisher, KidScreen Magazine, Canada |
| **PANELLISTS** | Tim Brooke-Hunt<br>Managing Director, Yoram Gross/Village Roadshow, Australia |
| | Marc du Pontavice<br>Head of Multimedia, Gaumont, France |
| | Anthony Bouchier<br>Joint Managing Director, The Quintus Group, UK |
| | Andrew Macbean<br>Managing Director, ITEL, UK |
| | Rita Carbone Fleury<br>Senior Vice President Cambium Releasing Inc, Canada |
| **PRODUCER** | Michael Carrington BBC |

A large panel, all with slightly different perspectives, tackled a series of questions about the distribution business. Firstly, is this where the money is to be found? How different is the children's market? And did it depend upon the territory you were operating from?

As the only 'pure' distributor **Andrew Macbean** felt that there was money to be made, but that much greater returns for all concerned could be achieved by exploiting a rang of possibilities from licensing to merchandising as long as you have clear brand management.

In **Anthony Bouchier's** view, successful distribution depended upon both the type of product and the strength of the domestic market: 'Distributors based in territories where the broadcasters are no longer investing in domestic animation will not make money because they are being forced to put a much higher proportion of budget up front and to become producers, which is not what they are.' This analysis was endorsed by the speakers from Australia, France and Canada, all of whom were finding it necessary to co-produce with other countries. This in its turn made the children's market a close-knit and specialist business with broadcasters constantly working together to fund and produce programmes.

Merchandising had clearly been a moneyspinner for some broadcasters but could certainly not be counted on, particularly as audiences contined to fragment. **Rita Carbone Fleury** thought that the huge success of some of the early products, such as Barney, had set up false expectations, although clearly Disney and Warner were still able to dictate trends because of their control over promotion, broadcasting and distribution. For smaller operators, however, it was important to focus on the main source of revenue – broadcast licence fees – and treat other activities such as merchandising as icing on the cake.

Discussion ranged from the nature of the producer/distributor relationship to the potential impact of new media such as CD-ROMs and the Internet on the marketplace. Whereas some contributors thought the feedback provided by interactivity was invaluable, others felt it could not be representative of the views of a mass-market audience at this stage of its development and should not affect business decisions. Above all, the preoccupation was finding funding for programme-making. Macbean described the distributor's role as 'an access point, a promoter who should be bringing added value to the process of getting a show into the marketplace.'

# screenings

Each lunchtime, screenings were made available to delegates. This was a chance to see some of the Summit's most talked-about programmes in their entirety – everything from boundary-breaking pre-school and teen magazines to the story of injured children in Sarajevo. They attracted sizeable audiences every day – over 100 people for *Teletubbies* – with delegates obviously appreciating the opportunity to talk to the programmes' producers in an informal setting.

Introduced by **Tony Labriola**, Supervising Producer/Director, Communications Services, Governors State University, Illinois, USA, the screenings were co-ordinated by **Isobel Reid**, Programme Officer, Independent Television Commission, UK. The programmes shown, together with the most relevant sessions from the Summit, are listed below:

***Teletubbies*** pre-school 'edutainment', commissioned by the BBC from Ragdoll, now a firm favourite with its intended audience after surprising many parents with its use of repetition and 'babytalk' (*see* Production – TV on trial: The child audience – Do we know what it is? and When I was very young)

***Trøbbel*** a graphic but sensitive cartoon about paedophilia made by the Norwegian Film Institute, first shown in a late-night discussion programme on NRK and then the following day during children's programming; it was preceded by a warning to parents and introduced by Norway's Children's Ombudsman, Trond Waage (*see* Politics – Where do you draw the line? The boundaries of children's television)

***Golden Lilies*** a documentary made by Bosnia Herzegovenia Television about a group of children who were badly injured during the war in Sarajevo (*see* Politics – No News is Bad News)

***Attack of the Giant Vulture*** one of Short Films by Short People, a project run by Nickelodeon's Creative Lab, which links children with film-makers to help create an original story or character and bring it to air; based on the theme of 'heroes', this film shows friendship turning into heroics when two girls rescue their friend from abduction by a giant vulture (*see* Production – By kids for kids)

***Mire Mara: Rosmarella*** an Irish-language puppetry series for young children, part of an initiative by the production company Eo Teilifis to address, with producers and broadcasters in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, common requirements or minority language programming (*see* Politics – Viva vernacular! Does anyone here speak English?)

***Dr Mag love*** a magazine from ZDF in Germany for young people between 12 and 16 which speaks freely about love and sex, aiming to promote self-confidence. This edited episode deals with safe sex and condom use for teenagers. (*see* Production – Too much too young – Teen programmes)

***Cartoons for Children's Rights*** a sample from UNICEF's most recent broadcasting initiative, in which over 80 animation studios from 25 countries produced 100 30-second public service announcements about issues such as the right to play, the right to an education and the right to self-expression. The spots are available free from UNICEF to broadcasters throughout the world (*see* Production – The role of children's television in human right's education)

***Society and Child*** children and adults discuss important issues in this series made for NTA by Nigerian production company Glorious Diamond Productions, on this occasion the place of female circumcision in modern Nigeria (*see* Production – Too much too young – Teen programmes and African Forum)

***The Adventures of Sam Digital in the 21st Century*** another film from Nickelodeon's Creative Lab, created and produced in Canada, this time based on the theme of visions of the future (*see* Production – By kids for kids)

***International Children's Day of Broadcasting*** an edited documentary made by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation giving a taste of how the country celebrated this special day for children (*see* Finance – William Hetzer from UNICEF in Show me the money! and African Forum)

***Virtual Reality: Activities of the Children's Media Committee*** a documentary showing several virtual reality projects for terminally ill children devised by Japan's Children's Media Committee and made by NHK (*see* New Media – Children's new media: Access, ownership, excellence)

***Blue's Clues: What's Blue Afraid Of?*** pre-school programme made by Nickelodeon using computer animation and live action to show how presenter Kevin and his puppy Blue use non-verbal clues to investigate and solve everyday problems (*see* Production – When I was very young and Global understanding, local survival – Finding the balance)

# summit library

Delegates were invited to submit up to two children's television programmes, made or transmitted since the First World Summit in March 1995, to the Summit Library. Co-ordinated by the British Film Institute (BFI), this allowed access to a diverse selection of programmes from every continent, covering all age groups and genres from pre-school animation to documentaries for teenagers.

A total of over 200 videotapes were submitted from countries as diverse as Ghana and Thailand, although the majority were from English-speaking countries. In addition, 20 tapes of award-winning programmes were provided by Prix Jeunesse, the renowned children's television festival held in Munich.

On average, around 40 people used the Library each day, with some delegates spending several hours watching programmes from a certain genre or age group. The list below shows the ten most viewed programmes:

1 *It'll Never Work*
BBC, UK (Prix Jeunesse winner, 7-12 non-fiction)

2 *Teletubbies*
BBC, UK

3 *Dag juf, tot Morgen*
(Class Dismissed), AVRO Television, Netherlands (Prix Jeunesse winner, up to 7 fiction)

4 *Coping with Grown Ups*
Channel 4 Television
(Prix Jeunesse winner, 7-12 fiction)

5 *Cartoons for Children's Rights*
UNICEF, USA

6 *Blabbermouth and Sticky Beak*
Double Exposure International, UK

7 *O Menino, a Favela e as Tampas de Panela*
(The Boy, the Slum and the Pan Lids), TV Cultura, Brazil (Prix Jeunesse second prize, up to 7 fiction)

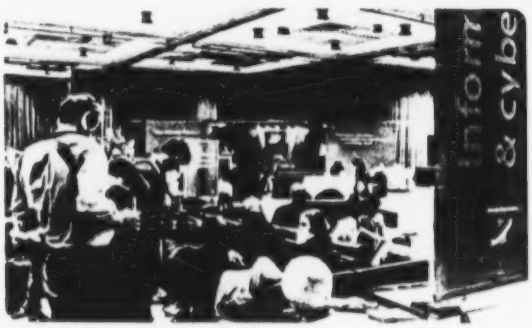
8 *The Genie from Down Under*
Australian Children's Television Foundation, Australia

9 *Wise Up*
Channel 4 Television (Prix Jeunesse second prize, 12-17 non-fiction)

10 *OS – det er bare os*
(Us – That's Us), Danmarks Radio TV, Denmark (Prix Jeunesse winner, up to 7 non-fiction)

The Summit Library was co-ordinated by Lucy Brown for the BFI. All the videotapes are now held in the BFI's Archive and provide a valuable record of children's programming from around the world at the end of the 20th century.

## information centre and cyber lounge




An information centre and cyber lounge was open to delegates throughout the Summit. This included exhibits by the Australian Children's Television Foundation, the European Children's Television Centre, Radiotelevisione Italiana, the Independent Television Commission, Broadcasting Standards Commission and REALTIME Animation Ltd from the UK, and the Children's Information Centre run by the junior delegates. The cyber lounge offered delegates the chance to access the Summit's website which was updated daily. Co-ordinated by Greg Childs from the BBC, the information centre was sponsored by News International.

# summit updates and future events

### The Animated Tales of the World

This exciting co-production project is progressing well. Details about particpating broadcasters are given with the account of the Summit session on page 61. Further information can be obtained from Penelope Middleboe, Series Editor at Right Angle
tel +44 (0)1834 845 676 or
e-mail right angle@dial.pipex.com

### Advertisers for Children's Television (ACT)

This idea of setting up a fund in the UK for children's programming to which advertisers could contribute was proposed by Tess Alps, Executive Chairman of Drum PHD at Day 4's session on advertising (see page 66). Since the Summit, a working party has formed to consider how to take this forward, with Anna Home at its head. It is currently envisaged that the fund would provide top-up financing to projects to which broadcasters (whether terrestrial, cable or satellite) have made a prior commitment, with the money going directly into programme budgets. Allocation of this additional financing, taking into account agreed criteria of quality and diversity, would be the reponsibility of panels made up of television professionals and 'lay' members with experience of children's lives.

Response to the idea from children's commissioning editors in the UK has been generally positive. The next step is to flesh out the proposal more fully and to apply for formal support from broadcasters, the Independent Television Commission and other relevant bodies before approaching advertisers for seed finance.

Please contact Nicci Crowther, Head of Children's Programmes at Pagoda Film & Television for futher information
tel +44 (0)171 534 3500 or
e-mail nicci@pagodafilm.co.uk

### SUMMIT 2000

**Children, Youth and the Media – Beyond the Millennium**

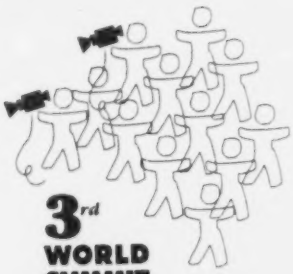
**Toronto, Canada 13-17 May 2000**

Summit 2000 will for the first time provide an opportunity for media educators from all parts of the world to meet professionals involved in the production and distribution of screen-based media – television, films and computer software – for young people.

The Summit will focus on three main areas – programming and production; distribution and access; and media education – in a mix of plenary sessions, workshops and informal discussions. Particular attention will focus on aboriginal media and their role in the protection of indigenous cultures and on the endemic underfunding of children's programmes. There will also be presentations of media research and academic investigation of issues related to young people and the media.

To be held in Toronto from 13 to 17 May 2000, the Summit is being co-ordinated by Canada's Alliance for Children and Television, the Jesuit Communication Project, the American Center for Children's Television and the Association for Media Literacy with guidance from an international steering committee.

For further information please see Summit 2000's website at www.summit2000.net




**Athens, Greece March 2001**

The Third World Summit, organised by the European Children's Television Centre, will explore differences in language, national and cultural identities and work for the creation of a common audio-visual language that supports the rights of children.

'We want to provide the whole panorama of audio-visual production and education that exists globally,' explains Athina Rikaki, Director of the European Children's Television Centre. 'This event will also bring the research community and the industry closer together. Entrust us with your innovative ideas and we will offer you space, equipment and time to present them live in front of the industry's most influential audience.'

For the preparation of the Third World Summit, an on-line service for information, exchange of views and project development will be launched on 1 January 1999 for children and professionals worldwide (www.ectc.com.gr). Entitled Media Talks on Children, this service is for everyone who wishes to discuss their ideas for what promises to be an innovative and exciting Summit.

For further information, please contact the European Children's Television Centre at:
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Summit on Television for Children

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The report is also available on
the Second World Summit's website
www.childrens-summit.org

The Annenberg Public Policy Center
can be contacted at
www.asc.upenn.edu/appc/



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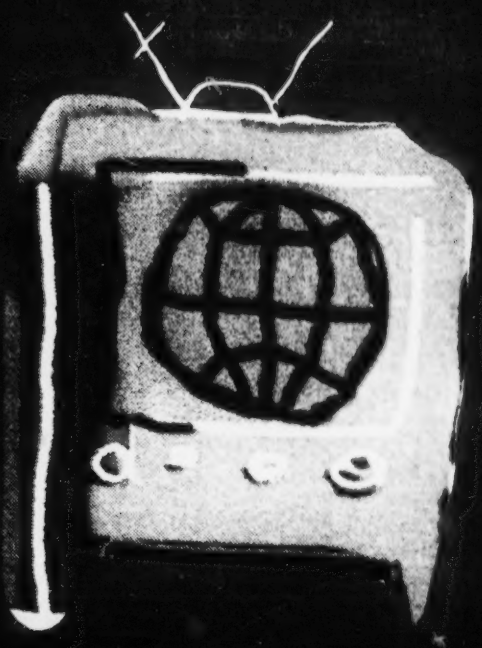

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